Keiichi Arawi's Complete Works

A Study of His Entire Oeuvre

Volume 1: “Early Manga” (1977-2006)

Keiichi Arawi: A Brief Biography

(For details, see "Career History" at the end of the book)

1977 Born in Tomita-machi, Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture

1996 Moved to Tokyo

2002 Began to pursue a career as a professional manga artist

Started creating self-published manga under the name "Himalayaniruka"

2006 Made his commercial manga magazine debut with *Kazemachi*

Won the Encouragement Prize at the 22nd Ace Newcomer Manga Award for *Nichijou*

Serialization of *Nichijou* began

2008 Serialization of the commercial version of *Helvetica Standard* began

Co-authored and began serialization of *Futari Football*

2011 *Nichijou* was adapted into an anime by Kyoto Animation

2014 Created the poster illustration for the "24th Gunma Citizen's Marathon 2014"

2015 Created the package illustration for Mechatro WeGo

Nichijou was selected as the 6th best manga in the SUGOI JAPAN AWARD 2015 hosted by the Yomiuri Shimbun

2016 Serialization of *CITY* began

2019 Designed the "Arawi Keiichi's Solid" figure

Held a mini-exhibition called "Arawi Keiichi's Paper on the Desk Exhibition"

2020　Began posting self-produced animations on YouTube

2021　Serialization of *Amemiya-san* began

The *Nichijou 15th anniversary box set* was released overseas

"As long as we live by seeing, hearing, and feeling,
creation from zero is equal to zero.
The person I am now is
influence + influence + influence + ...

It's hard to imagine that everyone receives the exact same influences.
That's why people are who they are.
Even snot bubbles are alive, you know.

I'm tired, so I'm going to sleep,
and you must never wake me up, okay?
You're smart, so you get it, right?

'Sometimes a short conversation can change a person's entire life, can't it?
Whether that's interesting or not is a different story.'"

[From Himarayairuka, "Found Things" (ミツケタモノ), September 19, 2003]

Introduction

The title of this book is "Keiichi Arawi's Complete Works: A Study of His Entire Oeuvre." As the title suggests, this book aims to satisfy the expectations of readers who want to know everything about the creations of the manga artist Keiichi Arawi.

To achieve this, we have systematically investigated and covered all of Arawi's works, including the independently produced (dōjinshi) manga that are not widely known. Furthermore, we have analyzed the creative process behind each work, as well as the themes and expressions that can be interpreted from them.

Arawi has gained widespread support across all generations and nationalities, primarily with his breakthrough work *Nichijou*, known for its charming art style and gag-focused humor [1]. At the same time, this artist's work has a unique and complex individuality that is often considered difficult or hard to understand.

Arawi's creations balance two seemingly contradictory elements: a broad appeal that is accessible to everyone and a uniqueness that sets his work apart from anyone else [2]. It is precisely this duality that allows a rich, inexhaustible world to unfold within his works.

This book serves as a guide for gaining a deeper understanding of these extraordinary manga works—which are often underestimated due to their nature as gag manga. It can provide a starting point for forming a comprehensive view of Keiichi Arawi, an artist about whom even his most dedicated readers may not know much.

At the same time, this book is also designed for readers who have read very little of this artist's work or who are hearing his name for the first time. No prior knowledge is necessary to follow this book. It is enough to know that there is a manga artist who is creating truly remarkable works.

After reading this book, you will be able to discuss Arawi's works and the artist himself as if you were talking about a close friend. At that time, I encourage you to read any works you have not yet experienced. You will surely discover a stunning world of art, full of fresh surprises.

*

This book, which serves as Volume 1 of our research, focuses on works created before Arawi debuted as a professional manga artist. Specifically, we have analyzed his early, independently produced manga published between 2002 and 2006 under the name Himarayairuka. (Volume 2 and subsequent volumes will focus on Arawi's career as a professional artist, beginning in 2006, and will primarily cover his commercially published works.)

This book is formatted as a single, extensive research volume, yet it is structured like a compilation of four smaller books, each comparable to a shinsho (a small-format paperback). The main text is divided into four distinct sections that can be considered separately.

With that in mind, let's go over the structure and goals of each section.

*

"Prologue" and "I. Early History" (1977–2006)

The first section summarizes Arawi's early life in a biographical format, leading up to his decision to become a manga artist.

Born Keiichi Arawi (real name: 新井圭一, "Arai Keiichi") in Tomita-machi, Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture, in 1977, Arawi spent his student years in the North Kanto region before moving to Tokyo after high school. In Tokyo, he initially pursued a career as a comedian but quickly gave up on it, working a variety of part-time jobs to make ends meet. Later, while working as a full-time employee at a printing company, he became a typesetter for manga and was inspired to pursue a professional career as a manga artist himself. He decided to become a manga artist in 2002, at the age of 24.

The popular culture of the 1980s and 90s and the people of Gunma and Tokyo who influenced Arawi during his youth were like mentors who nurtured his identity and creative style as an artist. His past experiences were filled with the essential elements needed to embark on his journey as a manga artist.

To explore what a person who would later become a professional manga artist saw, what influenced them, and what they intended to create, the "Prologue" and "I" sections unravel the quarter-century journey of a young man. Using his published essays, notes, and interview articles as clues, we will paint a portrait of the manga artist who would go on to create numerous works.

"II. Himarayairuka #1" (2002–2003)

This second section begins a detailed analysis of the independently produced manga that Arawi wrote up until 2006.

After his professional debut, Arawi became known as a gag manga artist, primarily due to his representative works like *Nichijou* and *CITY*. However, his early works, created when he first aspired to become a manga artist, were quite different. He was creating speculative and experimental works that could be called "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" (自己哲学漫画, "Self-philosophical Manga").

In these early comics, a young man in his mid-20s poured out his thoughts on self-perception and the other, or the "other person." While these thoughts stemmed from the artist's own unique and pressing concerns, they also held a universality that anyone could relate to. These "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" can truly be interpreted as philosophical books in the form of manga.

Furthermore, the combination of speculative language and suggestive manga expression gave these early works a level of completeness that is still worth reflecting on today. One of the main goals of Section II is to interpret these "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga."

Examining these works is also essential for understanding his later creations as a professional artist. This is because the core ideas that run through Arawi's work were cultivated through the very process of creating these early manga. Section II's other goal is to not only evaluate these manga on their own but also to show how the experience of creating them nurtured his unique worldview.

Section "II" mainly covers four manga published in 2003: *Shiawase no Kakudo* (幸せの角度, "The Angle of Happiness"), *Hakoniwa* (箱庭, "Miniature Garden"), *Hane* (はね, "Wing"), and *Machi* (街, "Town").

Shiawase no Kakudo is a story about an angel who carries the souls of the dead to heaven. Compared to his other works from the same period, it has more entertainment value. This book will trace the process through which Arawi conceived the work and then examine its themes of happiness and death to uncover the first signs of the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" to come.

Hakoniwa and *Hane* are at the core of his "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" and are complex works set in the human psyche. *Hakoniwa* depicts a girl who withdraws into a space modeled on the human mind, while *Hane* portrays a girl who is a "thought of existence" within another person's mind. From these stories of girls grappling with irrational realities and confronting an unknown "other," we can read Arawi's reflections on solipsism and the philosophy of other minds.

Machi is a work with a lively cast of characters—a robot, a girl, a god, and a grim reaper—and can be read as a joyful precursor to the gag manga that would later become *Nichijou*. Yet, it also powerfully expresses the theme of "benevolence" that evolved from his ideas about the "other." As with the previous two works, we will pick up on Arawi's philosophical views and examine what influence they had on the worldview of the manga he would later publish.

In addition to these works, we have also included a section titled "On the Eve of Comitia" that details the circumstances under which Arawi began participating in the manga exhibition and sales event Comitia. Furthermore, we will also discuss the surreal manga *Inpū* (隠風, "Hidden Wind"), which served as the inspiration for *Hane*, and other preliminary sketches.

"III. Himarayairuka #2" (2003–2004)

After publishing *Machi*, Arawi concluded his "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" centered on the self and others and began to search for his next theme. The conclusion he reached was the exact opposite of his previous deep, philosophical approach. He decided to make a new methodology—drawing without thinking—the core of his manga creation.

Arawi called this state of mind, where one lets the pen move without conscious thought, "Kūkūjakujaku" (空々寂々, It means that everything is insubstantial, quiet, and undisturbed.) a term he borrowed from Buddhism. Section III of this book is primarily dedicated to interpreting these second experimental manga, the "Kūkūjakujaku Manga."

Drawing without thinking means, in other words, to begin creating based on one's present mood and sensibilities. If the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" were an expression of Arawi's thought, then the "Kūkūjakujaku Manga" (空々寂々漫画) can be said to reflect his sensory side.

And because this sensory manga expression is born from the accumulation of the artist's past experiences, it possesses a unique quality that no one else can replicate. This allowed us to evaluate these works from a different perspective than the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga."

In Section III, we mainly cover *Kokoro* (こころ, "Heart") and *Helvetica Standard*, both published in 2004.

Kokoro is an experimental work that embodies the philosophy of Kūkūjakujaku. When creating this work, Arawi deliberately avoided making rough drafts or storyboards. He improvised his drawings based on the images that came to mind, shaping the manga as he went. As a result, the story appears illogical and nonsensical, with a series of meaningful-looking objects appearing and disappearing before a young girl.

However, by connecting this seemingly elusive work to Arawi's past creations, we can interpret its meaning. Precisely because he consciously tried to draw without thinking, *Kokoro* became a work that, as its title suggests, reflects the state of the artist's heart.

Helvetica Standard is a series of works that concurrently published comical essay manga and surreal gag manga. Unlike *Kokoro*, this series is relatively easy to read and entertaining.

Even so, it is certainly one of the "Kūkūjakujaku Manga." This is because both the essays, which capture the artist's daily trifles, and the absurd gags, which feature events beyond the realm of common sense, are driven by the artist's sensibilities. By trying to draw fun stories intuitively and without overthinking, he naturally arrived at the format of *Helvetica Standard.*

Incidentally, Arawi continued the *Helvetica Standard* series after his professional debut, moving the publication to a commercial magazine in 2008. The series continues to this day (2023), making it a lifelong work [3]. Therefore, understanding this manga can also help us predict the future trajectory of Arawi's career.

In addition to these, Section III also covers the compilation *Sasameyuki* (細雪, "Light Snow"), the unfinished animation project *Anonymous* (アノニマス), and his first web manga *Futsū* (ふつう, "Ordinary"). In these, we analyze his renewed resolve to become a professional manga artist in *Sasameyuki*, his ideal art style in *Anonymous*, and the beginnings of his surreal worldview in *Futsū*.

"IV. To a Professional Manga Artist" (2004–2006)

After pursuing his "Kūkūjakujaku Manga" and creating *Helvetica Standard* without conscious thought, Arawi confirmed three optimistic qualities he had within himself. The first was his ability to find value in the useless and the meaningless and to enjoy the absurd. The second was the concept of benevolence he had discovered in *Machi*. And the third was the will to affirm everyday, ordinary life.

In a sense, Arawi created *Homare* (誉, "Honor/Praise") by following these seemingly carefree qualities. The first half of Section IV of this book analyzes this manga, which became the prototype for *Nichijou*.

Unlike his past experimental works, *Homare* was established as a lighthearted gag manga. It was simply a story of three junior high school girls living out their days, engaging in trivial exchanges and enjoying a relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

Although the plot may seem insignificant, Arawi celebrates the girls' carefree attitude as a form of "praise". Because it had no special twists, this paradoxical work, which was neither a "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" nor a "Kūkūjakujaku Manga," expressed the artist's philosophy in a straightforward way.

By the time he completed *Homare*, Arawi was just one step away from his commercial manga debut. The gag manga that would follow was created by combining the worldview of Homare with elements from *Helvetica Standard*. Here, we also see how Arawi found his direction as a manga artist.

Having built up his skills through his independent works, Arawi felt he was on the right track. At the same time, however, a growing anxiety about whether he could truly succeed as a professional manga artist began to set in.

In response, he decided to use manga to spur himself on. He created a story about a girl who longs to be a manga artist but lacks the courage to take the final step, hoping to use it to decide whether to continue pursuing a professional career. The latter half of Section IV of this book analyzes these "Manga Michi Manga" (漫画道漫画, "'The Way of Manga' Manga") that would guide Arawi's future.

Since Arawi had previously worked on works that were not straightforward, interpreting his "Manga Michi Manga" is no easy task. The first work, *Milestone* (マイルストーン), applies the worldview cultivated in his "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" and is set in the mental world of a girl who aspires to be a manga artist. Using allegorical objects, she declares her resolve to become a professional manga artist through an equally roundabout expression.

The second work, *Hirake!* (開けっ！, "Open It!," The official English title is *Open the Door!*), is a surreal story in which an aspiring writer girl meets another version of herself who has emerged from her own mind. Through conversations with herself, the girl chooses to walk the path of an writer. This choice was also a declaration of Arawi's own resolve.

The struggles of a girl who has a dream but is full of conflict are something many people can relate to. However, while the characters' emotions are relatable, the works are full of surreal designs and poetic language, giving both of them a subtle and profound style. In that sense, the "Manga Michi Manga" also embodies both universality and uniqueness, making them works worthy of careful consideration.

*

Arawi, who was virtually an amateur in the world of manga, quickly rose to prominence in just three years, making his professional debut in 2006. The serialized manga that followed, *Nichijou*, became a long-running hit over a decade, and after its conclusion, it made a comeback in 2021. His next work, *CITY*, was also well-received, and the serialization of *Helvetica Standard* has continued for an extended period.

In addition to his manga, he has taken on work as an illustrator and has recently shown remarkable activity in the field of short-form animation. As of 2022, his latest work, *Amemiya-san*, was a so-called "one-person media mix project," where he single-handedly produced both the animation and the manga.

Looking at his resume, Arawi's career might seem to have been smooth sailing. One might see the emergence of a supernova talent who was duly recognized by the public. However, it's clear that the path to becoming a professional manga artist involved extraordinary struggles. Before he was a great manga artist, Arawi was a person striving to become one.

The young man who fought to become a manga artist, after much trial and error, created four types of manga that only he could draw. These are the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga," the "Kūkūjakujaku Manga," the "Manga Michi Manga," and the gag manga that became the prototype for his commercial work. These four independent manga, in turn, served as the foundation for his commercial series like *Nichijou*.

You can begin reading this book from any section. However, if you read it in the order it's presented, you will be able to meticulously observe the process of an artist's growth. The purpose of this book, throughout all its chapters, is to explore Arawi's brilliant creations while also coming to understand the artist behind them.

The Genesis of This Book and Acknowledgments

This research book is based on the first edition of *Arawi Keiichi's Complete Works Encyclopedia*, a booklet that was distributed in limited numbers four years ago (2018). However, this book has been thoroughly revised based on a more detailed examination of the source material.

The most significant change from the first edition is that we received cooperation from Keiichi Arawi himself for interviews. After publishing the first edition, I felt the content was still incomplete and planned to create a more precise research book. It was at this time that I was contacted by Arawi, who had come across the first edition.

Seeing this as a fortunate opportunity, I requested an interview. He agreed to cooperate within the scope of what he could answer. As a result, this book was able to conduct an exclusive interview with Arawi, allowing for an in-depth investigation into the previously unrevealed parts of his early life that led him to become a manga artist.

Without this interview, this book could not have been completed. In particular, the biographical sections in the "Prologue" and "I" chapters relied heavily on this new information. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to him. I also sincerely thank him for giving us permission to quote his illustrations and manga.

However, it must be stressed that this book is not a collaboration with Arawi. He simply answered questions and gave permission to quote from the interview, and I am solely responsible for the content. Also, not all of my questions were answered. In some cases, he withheld his response on certain topics or had forgotten past events.

*

As an approach to studying his works, this book adopts a biographical criticism method to explore the artist's intent. I have always felt that Arawi's creations reflect his existential self. By deciphering his past history and the origins that shaped his artistry, I wanted to verify the true nature of the personality that I believe permeates his works. The decision to interview Arawi himself and begin the main text in a biographical format stems from this very objective.

Generally, manga is thought to be understandable even without information about the artist. Therefore, some readers may initially find our analysis to be unusual. However, I believe that if you can gain the same perspective as the artist, you will be able to appreciate their work from a different angle. I believe this perspective is a crucial key to understanding Arawi's works [4].

By tracing the trajectory of a manga artist's creative journey, we can grasp the personality of not just the works but the artist themselves. By standing as close as possible to the artist, we can pursue the unseen value of their works that may have been difficult for readers to perceive. It is from this perspective that I will begin the research in the main chapters that follow.

---

[1]. When the serialization of *Nichijou* began, its main target audience in the magazine *Monthly Shonen Ace* was male high school students in their late teens. However, when the tankōbon (volume) was released in 2007, the first to appreciate *Nichijou* were adult readers with a deep knowledge of subculture. This is evidenced by the fact that various culture magazines, such as *Weekly ASCII*, *Quick Japan*, *Studio Voice*, and *SPA!*, all featured *Nichijou* and praised the cutting-edge nature of its gags (see endnotes for detailed sources).

Subsequently, the broadcast of the anime adaptation of *Nichijou* by Kyoto Animation led to a further expansion of its readership. In particular, when the anime was re-broadcast on E-Tele (NHK Educational TV) in 2012, support from younger children, including elementary school students, and female readers surged. This can be attributed to the cute art style and slapstick humor that attracted these readers. According to the November 2012 issue of Nikkei Entertainment!, the success of *Nichijou* increased the proportion of female readers for *Ace* by 10% compared to the previous year, and the main readership shifted to teenagers in their early teens.

By the late 2010s, it had gained a large number of fans outside of Japan. With the release of the English-dubbed Blu-ray of the anime in 2019, it became widely known to people in English-speaking countries. As a result, the US streaming site Crunchyroll and the business magazine *Forbes* selected *Nichijou* as one of the "anime that defined the 2010s" (see endnotes for detailed article information). Arawi's reputation also grew, and in 2021, to celebrate the 15th anniversary of *Nichijou*, Kodansha USA released a special English-language limited edition of the series, the "*nichijou 15th anniversary box set*," exclusively for overseas fans. Thus, over time, the names *Nichijou* and Arawi expanded their audience from teenagers to adults, children, and international readers.

[2]. According to an interview published in *Tia's Magazine 89*, while Nichijou was praised for its intense gags and individuality, it also received feedback that it was difficult and hard to understand. However, the support for Arawi's manga was not limited to a niche, subculture readership. As noted in footnote 1, it has received support from a wide range of audiences, and the cumulative circulation of *Nichijou* was announced to be 3.7 million

copies as of 2014 (stated on the band of the *Nichijou no Natsuyasumi* volume). The actual circulation is likely higher, as reprints are still being made as of 2023. The distinctiveness of *Nichijou* and, by extension, Arawi's works lies in the fact that despite containing avant-garde elements, they have reached a large number of people.

[3]. The commercially serialized version of *Helvetica Standard* changed its title to *Tengoku* (天国, "Heaven") from 2013 to 2021. However, the content remained essentially the same, so it can be considered a continuation of *Helvetica Standard*.

[4]. Ultimately, the validity of authorial criticism is difficult to prove objectively. No one can truly verify the author's intentions (self-referential accounts can be embellished or mistaken), and even the author does not have complete control over their work (some creations are born from unconscious thought or chance). Because of this clear weakness, studies that link works to their authors have faced much criticism since the 20th century.

However, even with this weakness in mind, I have chosen to begin this book with a biography of Keiichi Arawi. I believe it is impossible to analyze Arawi's manga without pointing out that they reflect the artist's experiences and feelings on a different level from a simple essay or autobiographical manga.

Of course, the weaknesses of authorial criticism are not easily overcome, and it is frustrating that the validity of my interpretations cannot be fully guaranteed. But this does not mean that all authorial research should be dismissed as wrong. In this book, I will present a portrait of the manga artist Keiichi Arawi by analyzing the elements that constitute his artistry and identifying the characteristics that seem certain.

Contents

Keiichi Arawi: A Brief Biography........1
Introduction........4
The Genesis of This Book and Acknowledgments........13

Prologue

Guided by the Feeling of "I Just Like It"........20
Discovering the "Perfect Book Report"........20
Writing Only About What You Like........22
"I Just Like 'Somehow'"........26
The "Somehow Good" Feeling That Cannot Be Put into Words #1........29
The "Somehow Good" Feeling That Cannot Be Put into Words #2........32

I. Early History

Primary Experiences #1: Birth and Elementary School Years (1977–1990)........38
Pop Media and a Nightly Prayer #1........38
Pop Media and a Nightly Prayer #2........43
The Beginning Rain and the Beginning of Drawing........46
Aiming for a Place Different from Anyone Else #1........49
Aiming for a Place Different from Anyone Else #2........53
Deformed Art Style and Detailed Backgrounds........56
A Feeling Similar to "Moe" Strikes My Heart........62
A World Full of Fun........66

Primary Experiences #2: Junior High School Years (1990–1993)........75
Starting to Chase His Own "Somehow Likes"........75
"This Idle Chat Just Got Serious"........78
The Origins of Essay Manga and Absurdist Comedy........80
Reader Submission Culture and "Stupidity"........84
Obsession with Radio Broadcasts........88
Cannot Blend In, Wants to Create Something Interesting #1........91
Cannot Blend In, Wants to Create Something Interesting #2........94

So Many Things I Want to Do #1: High School Years (1993-1996)........99
Starting Projects with Friends........99
Watching Anime Alone #1........104
Watching Anime Alone #2........108
Art to Connect with Others, Art to Prove Himself........111
Happiness from Making Someone Laugh........114
The Rain Has Stopped, Let's Go Outside........117

So Many Things I Want to Do #2: After Moving to Tokyo (1996–2002)........123
City Nights and Spotlights........123
The Inability to "Perform"........127
Yesterday's Self Would Be Surprised #1........130
Yesterday's Self Would Be Surprised #2........133
Live According to Yourself........139

The Way of Manga #1: Medical Asahi Illustration Placement (2001–2004)........145
First Commercial Illustrations........145
Information for Illustrations in Medical Asahi's "Dr. Eiichi Hasegawa's Wisdom Bag"........150

The Way of Manga #2: Website Launch and Shinkōsha Employment (2000–2002)........157
Launch of "Arai-ryū Sumi-e"........157
Returning to a Cute Art Style........159
This Praise Is Not Real "Praise"........162
The Job That Let Me Read Many Manga........166
Days Spent Thinking "I Must Get Better" Are Wonderful Days #1........169

Days Spent Thinking "I Must Get Better" Are Wonderful Days #2........172

II. Himarayairuka #1

The Eve of Comitia (September–December 2002)..........182
The Birthplace of Creative Manga........183
Go, Now, Be... The Manga *Nantonaku*........186
First Absurdist and Essay Manga: *Gona B* and *Manga-dō*........190
First Guest Contribution to a Dōjinshi: *Final Fantasy XI* Fan Manga........195

Angel's Perspective: Contemplating *Shiawase no Kakudo* (February 2003)........201
From "Futsū-chan" to "Angel Pino"........202
Reality Lies Within "An Ordinary Everyday Life".............208
A Title Celebrating Happiness and the Japanese Song That Sang of It........213
Inverting the Perception of Death........217
First Manga, First Comitia Exhibition........221

Mental World and the "Self-Philosophical" #1: *Hakoniwa* (May 2003)........227
Encounter and Influence of *Monthly Manga Garo*............228
The Birth of the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga"........232
Drawing Manga as Sandplay Therapy........235
The Reclusive Girl and the Session with Others........238
Deepening Philosophy and Hitting the Wall of Isolation........241
Beginning to Draw Illustrations Without Outlines...........245

The Joy of Playing with Manga Expression: *Inpū* (August 2003)........249
A Manga Where the Speech Bubble is the Protagonist........250

Mental World and the "Self-Philosophical" #2: *Hane* (August 2003)........255
The Second "Jiko Tstugaku Manga"........256
From the World of Solipsism to the World of Alterity......259
The Essence of the Mental World is in Emotion................262
How the Death of a Loved One Appears to Others.............266
It Felt Like Little "Wings" Had Sprouted........269
The Prototypes for *Hane* and *Machi*........273

A World Full of Love: *Machi* (November 2003)................277
The Utopia of His Youth........278
Blending Leisurely and Absurd Gag Styles........283
May Love Be Shared with All People........289
Love and a Name are Granted to the Youth........293
Hands Intertwine, The World Changes........296

III. Himarayairuka #2

A Dream Continued on His Own Two Feet: Compilation Volume *Sasameyuki* (February 2004)........302
Relating to *Manga Michi*........305
To the World He Widely and Passionately Longed For....309

Universal and Unchanging Art Style #1: *Anonymous* (September 2003)........316
Universal and Unchanging, Untainted by Trends.............316
Devising Charming Creature Designs........321

Universal and Unchanging Art Style #2: *Futsū* (December 2003)........329
Pop Shapes, A World Without "Ordinary"........329

Kūkūjakujaku Creations #1: *Helvetica Standard* Early Period (March–May 2004)........337
Turning Himarayairuka's Memos into Manga..................341
Between Real Experience and Fiction........346
Drawing by Sensation, Not Logic........351

Kūkūjakujaku Creations #2: *Kokoro* (May 2004)............356
Let's Turn on the Power of Self-Automatic Writing........358

Wooden Box = The Spirit of Others, Wood Grain = Passing Time........361
A Snot Bubble = The Symbol of Death, Rain = Immersion in Worry........366
The Self That Sees the "Self Seen by Others"........370

The Unknown Past is New: *Helvetica Standard* Mid-Period (May–July 2004)........374
Past Games and the "Nostalgia Correction"........376
Jazz and Freedom, A Source of the Past........380
Wakaba Heights and "Requiem"........384

Supplement: Creative Works Not Covered in Sections "II"–"V" (2002–2004)........390
Web Radio Broadcasting........390
DTM (Desktop Music) Composition........391
Free Paper Editing and Production........391
Contribution to Collaborative Dōjinshi Manga Magazines........392
Novels, Calendars, and Other Works........392
Web Radio (2002–2004) Broadcast Information........394
Music Works Publication/Issue Information........395
Free Paper *Mogura Vol.0* Issue Information........397
Free Paper *Shouwa. Ichi* Issue Information........397
Guest Manga Contributed to Collaborative Dōjinshi Information........400
Novel Works Publication Information........402
Matchbox "Himarayairuka Roman Match" Production Information........403
Calendar "Himarayairuka First Half Calendar: 05 Life" Issue Information........404
Obake Poi! Writing Information........406

IV. To a Professional Manga Artist

Run-up to Commercial Manga #1: *Homare* (August 2004)........411
Individually Rich Trio of Girls........412
The Easter Eggs Hidden in the Background........417
Calling Ordinary Days "Homare"........422
May Love Be Shared With All People, Again........426

Run-up to Commercial Manga #2: *Helvetica Standard* Late Period (August–December 2004)........432
Self-Homage to Subsequent Works........434
The Robot Girl and the Professor Girl........438

The Distance Between a Professional Manga Artist and Me #1: *Milestone* (November 2004)........441
"Let's Meet on Another Way"........442
The Tree is So Ripe........446
Critique and Response from the Past Self........451
Creators Who Are Ahead of Me........455
Ultimately, the "Coordinate" is One........459
That Is What I Want to Be........463

The Distance Between a Professional Manga Artist and Me #2: *Hirake!* (August 2006)........469
I Become a Professional Manga Artist, But... 471
The Melancholy of Summer Ending........476
In Search of "Naked Emotions"........479
An Immense Distance is Just One Step........482
The End of Manga Set in the Mental World........485
So, What Action Will "We" Take?........490

Appendix and Notes

Introduction to Self-Produced Manga Stories........497
Major Works That Influenced Arawi........550
Sources for the Main Text (Works by Keiichi Arawi)........557
Sources for the Main Text (Interviews, Reviews, etc.)........562
Keiichi Arawi Career Timeline (1977–March 2022)........565

Prologue

Where should we begin when considering the complex manga artist Keiichi Arawi? Perhaps it's best to start with a story about a magazine journalist who had a profound influence on him.

In 2002, at the age of 24, Arawi received a crucial insight from this journalist that would define his future style.

The journalist's writing conveyed a simple, yet essential, truth about the core of creation to the artistically sensitive young man.

Guided by the Feeling of "I Just Like It"

Discovering the "Perfect Book Report"

In May 2002, a serialized article began on Famitsu.com, the website for the game magazine *Famitsū*. Titled *Vana'diel Taizaiki* (ヴァナ・ディール滞在記, "Records of a Stay in Vana'diel") and later compiled into a book the following year, this game review had a decisive impact on the mid-20s Arawi.

> ***I could never write book reports in school. I was convinced that if I only wrote about my own feelings, people who didn't know the work would never understand it. But Vana'diel Taizaiki taught me that it was perfectly fine to do just that. For me, it was the perfect book report.***
> [From an interview for this book]

As its subtitle "*Final Fantasy XI* Play Diary" suggests, *Vana'diel Taizaiki* was an article about the online game of the same name. It was natural for Famitsū.com to cover this title, which had garnered attention as the first MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game) in the *Final Fantasy* series. However, thanks to the author Yasuhiro Nagata's distinctive narrative style, *Vana'diel Taizaiki* stood out from a simple game introduction.

It was unique from the very beginning. Despite being a game review, the articles didn't start talking about the game itself in the early installments. Instead, Nagata humorously reported on the difficulty of getting the special equipment necessary to play the online game, which was in short supply.

Once he began playing, his writing became lyrical, describing the appearance of monsters, the beautiful scenery, and his interactions with other players he met online. Furthermore, to accommodate readers who weren't playing the game, he deliberately minimized the use of proper nouns. This allowed the series to be read not only as a review of *Final Fantasy XI* but also as a unique and imaginative travelogue.

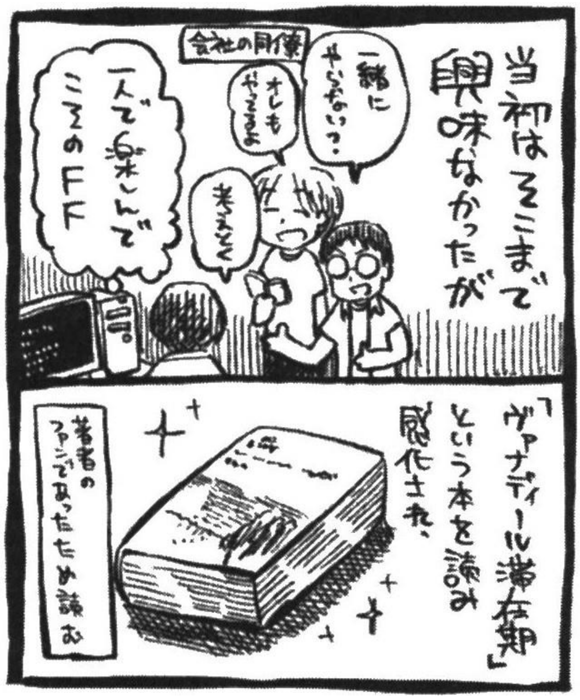
From Nagata, who focused on his own experience rather than just introducing the work, Arawi gained a key insight: it's okay to write only about your own feelings.

In fact, from 2003, Arawi began publishing experimental manga that prioritized the expression of his thoughts and feelings over traditional storytelling. There is no doubt that the existence of *Vana'diel Taizaiki*, which he hailed as a "perfect book report," was a major factor in shaping his unique artistic style.

Incidentally, Arawi had already admired Nagata before *Vana'diel Taizaiki* began. As an avid reader of *Famitsū* and its predecessor, *Famicom Tsūshin*, he had been paying close attention to this game journalist from an early stage.

> ***A person's "likes" are comforting. I was shocked when I saw how Nagata-san, who was an editor at Famitsū, wrote his articles based solely on how much he "liked" something*** [1]***.***
> [From an interview for this book]

Nagata's writing, which was simply about how much he liked something, felt exceptionally interesting to Arawi. This conviction, combined with the one he gained from *Vana'diel Taizaiki*, solidified the foundation for Arawi's manga. He began his creative work by using a strong affection for things he personally liked as his starting point.


当初はそこまで興味なかったが
会社の同僚
一緒にやらない？
オレもやってるよ
考えとく
一人で楽しんでこそのFF
「ヴァナディール滞在期」という本を読み感化され、
著者のファンであったため読む

From Helvetica Standard note, "The Story of Being Unable to Live in a Game Anymore: Part 1" (ゲームの中に住めなくなった話 前編), June 10, 2021: This essay manga details how Arawi, who was recommended to play *Final Fantasy XI* by a co-worker, became engrossed in the game.

Writing Only About What You Like

An excellent example of how Arawi was influenced by Nagata is the essay "tekeretsunopa" from the free paper *shouwa. Ichi* (shouwa。壱).

Published in 2004, this essay was written while Arawi was listening to CDs of classical rakugo (a traditional Japanese storytelling performance). He wrote about the performance of "Shinigami" (The God of Death) by the fifth-generation Kokontei Shinshō. However, in the text, he barely mentions the content of the performance or the performer. Instead, he focuses on the pleasant-sounding phonetics of a certain spell that appears in the story: "tekeretsunopa" [2].

He even states that he "probably shouldn't think" about the reason he loves this phrase. He spent the majority of the page replaying this word in his mind, which simply gave him a "comfortable feeling."

> ***It's not like it's a mysterious chant from Kokontei Shinshō's rakugo or that the strange sound somehow twisted into "tekeretsu." What is this strange feeling that envelops you? It's not just the sound of the word; it's an incredibly comfortable word. I just like it. Why? No, I probably shouldn't think about it. It makes me feel like something impossibly great is about to happen, but also like nothing will happen at all. And yet, there's no sense of contradiction; in fact, it gives me a comfortable feeling. It's an irresistibly strange spell. I don't think even "paropunte" can compare.*** [From "freedom two tekeretsunopa"]

In this way, Arawi took the feeling of "I just like it" and wrote it directly onto the page without trying to explain it in detail. This essay, which connected "tekeretsunopa" to "paropunte" from the game *Momotaro Dentetsu* based on their similar auditory appeal, was a variation on Nagata's style of expression.

Another essay influenced by Nagata is "A Chance Performance" (偶然の興業), included in the collection *Futari Soccoer: 2-shiaime* (ふたりサッカー 2 試合目, "Futari Soccer: The Second Match"). In this piece, Arawi says he finds "troublemakers more fascinating than star players" and lists his impressions of players in European soccer leagues as they come to mind.

While he uses phrases like "thrilled," "enraptured," and "makes my heart pound," the underlying structure of the text is the same as Nagata's. He was simply writing down words based on his feelings of "liking" something [3].

> ***I was blown away by José Luis Chilavert. I was thrilled by his intense leadership. I was enraptured by the sight of him encouraging each and every crestfallen player after they lost***

> ***to France in the '98 World Cup. The reason he punched Asprilla was because he said "his face looked stupid and it pissed me off." That was the absolute best.***
>
> ***I love Simeone. I can't quite put into words the way this man, once hailed as the "Second Maradona," became a hitman in the midfield. Actually, what really makes my heart pound is the fact that he's had the look of a midfield hitman from the very start. And, in the same '98 World Cup, the way he took down Beckham at the peak of his career is a major plus.***
>
> ***Joey Barton is the same. Seeing his play on the field made me love City. The way he used both of his hands on and off the field made me love him even more. When I saw him mooning the crowd, I thought, "A hero has appeared!"***
>
> ***Dyer and Bowyer gave me a thrill. When Bowyer got frustrated with the lack of passes, he delivered a furious blow to Dyer. The way teammates fought with each other during a game now reminds me of the Pacquiao vs. Mayweather fight.***
>
> [From "A Chance Performance," included in *Futari Soccoer 2-shiaime*]

For another example, consider the handwritten essay "Ban" (盤, "Board"). Reflecting on his elementary school days, Arawi realizes he loved board games' boards and pieces more than the games themselves, and he simply strings together phrases like "I like it," "It's good," and "It gets me excited." He then recalls that the origin of this preference was his profound experience with the action-puzzle game *Knight Lore* [4].

The essay concludes with the phrase, "That's just the whole story." It demonstrates that a piece of writing can be entirely based on the simple act of confirming what you like.

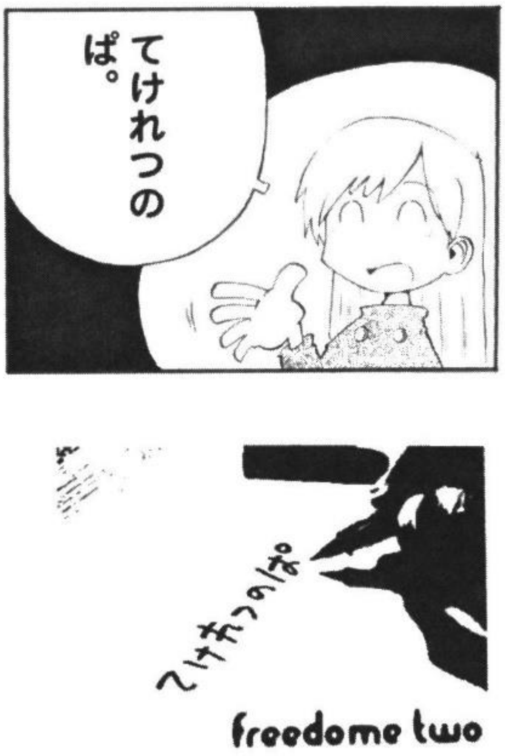
> ***I like boards. Like chess and shogi boards. I'm not that into the games themselves, but I love the squares. The pieces are good too. I also love looking at art like in Tactics Ogre. I've never played the game, but just looking at the screen gets me excited. I probably like looking at the models more than playing the board games. I think the origin of this is when I was a kid and was blown away by a game called Knight Lore at a relative's house. That's just the whole story.***
>
> [From "Ban," a bookstore purchase bonus for *CITY* Volume 7]

Even after making his professional debut as a manga artist, Arawi continued to believe in Nagata's style of writing. That's why he expressed his love for his favorite subjects, like soccer and games, with a single word: "like" [5].

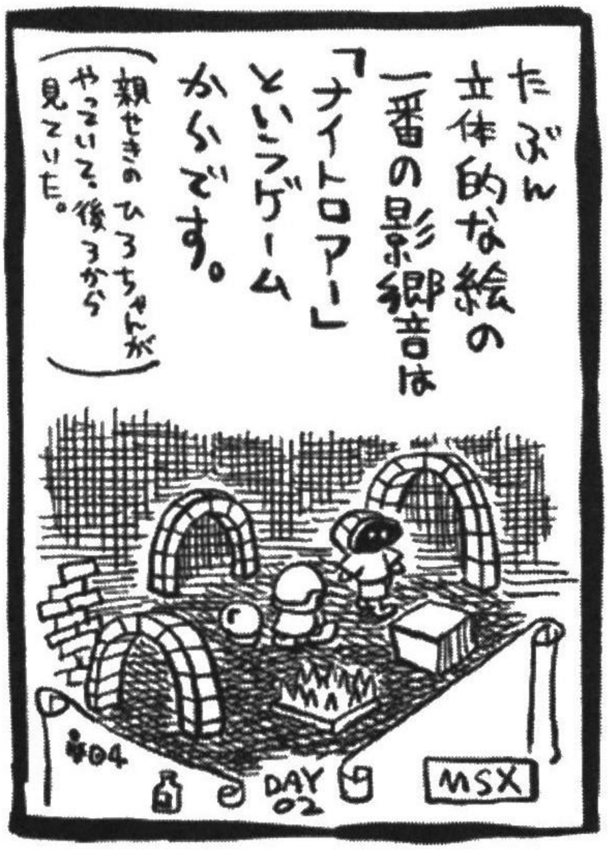
Of course, Arawi's manga is composed of many other elements. A more detailed analysis would have to take into account the styles of expression and themes seen throughout his work. But the fact that his creative process is "guided by the feeling of what he likes" is certainly the first characteristic that must be understood.

> ***My creative works are first and foremost influenced by other works. I watch novels, manga, and movies, and I hold on to the things that I think are "good." Then I reassemble them inside of myself.*** [From "Young Artists Ask 'The Secret of Manga!'" (若手作家が聞く『マンガの極意！』) on the *Jump SQ.* official website]

The act of "reassembling" the things he thinks are "good" inside himself—this simple approach, in a way—will be revisited repeatedly throughout the main chapters of this book.


てけれつのぱ。
てけれつのぱ
freedome two
tekeretsunopa

From illustration for the essay "tekeretsunopa" published in *shouwa. Ichi.*


たぶん
立体的な絵の
一番の影響は
「ナイトロアー」
というゲーム
からです。
（親せきのひろちゃんが
やっていて、後ろから
見ていた。）
#04
DAY 02
MSX

From Helvetica Standard note, "Q&A Session #7" (質問応答第 7 回), July 5, 2021: Arawi cited *Knight Lore* as the origin of his artwork's "three-dimensional" composition.

"I Just Like 'Somehow'"

Let's delve a bit deeper into the creative process Arawi learned from Nagata. It seems important that his approach to creation, which uses his feelings of "liking" something as its foundation, led to a style that rejects criticism and negativity.

Upon reflection, the idea of being able to write only about your own feelings could be misinterpreted as a license to vent frustration about things you dislike. And it's not unusual for an artist to reflect what they're passionate about in their work. If Arawi had simply been using his work to condemn things he found disagreeable, there would have been no need for a special analysis.

However, just as Nagata's writing did, Arawi's work brings in no negative feelings. Without going into detailed examples here and sticking to the broader strokes of his work, let's look at the art style of his serialized manga, such as *Nichijou*, *CITY*, and *Amemiya-san*. This distinctively cute art style was created as an accumulation of the drawing styles from his favorite works that he had read in the past.

Also, his series frequently reference '80s and '90s pop culture and the names of European soccer players. It is more accurate to assume these are included simply because he likes them, not for the purpose of parody or mockery.

Furthermore, his creative approach can be inferred from the mindset of the characters in his works. His characters, who are honest about their desires yet never demean or criticize others, are a mirror image of the artist himself.

Hearing that he incorporates things he likes might make his process seem carefree. However, this approach of creating work by pursuing only the things he likes is filled with a kind of stoicism. It's a paradoxical statement, but Arawi disciplined his emotions and pursued his sense of "liking" in a purely ascetic way. This attitude of "rejecting negativity" is an indispensable part of understanding his work as a whole [6].

Another important point is that Arawi is particularly drawn to things for which he cannot put his reasons into words. Let's refer back to *shouwa. Ichi* to analyze this tendency.

In the title essay "shouwa.," Arawi mentions *How Many Miles to the Graveyard?* (墓場まで何マイル？), the final work by poet Shūji Terayama, and comments, "it's somehow cool." He goes on to say that the "somehow" part of "somehow cool" is what's important to him.

> ***The "Tower of the Sun" is somehow cool. "Hanging scrolls" are somehow cool. The name "Mighty Bomb Jack" sounds somehow good. The "Prio" in DiCaprio is somehow good too.***

> ***That's the feeling. I just like "somehow." I think it's because when "somehow" is attached to "good," it feels like a "freedom that isn't restricted." When you can classify your "liking" with a reason like "I like this because of that," it feels like that liking is already in someone else's hands and not your own "original liking." It's not like I hate that kind of classified liking, though.***
> [From "shouwa Freedom magazine" [7]]

If you can explain why you like something, that feeling can be shared with others. This makes it feel like it's no longer a purely personal preference. Conversely, a strong feeling that can only be described as "somehow" is so difficult to grasp that it becomes your own personal possession precisely because it can't be conveyed to anyone else. That's why he just likes "somehow."

This statement suggests a stance of not seeking shared experiences, but rather desiring to be alone. If you think about it, the best way to create a work that is widely accepted is to align with what many readers like and to follow current trends. If he simply wanted to be honest about his own tastes, he could have incorporated elements that both he and a large audience would love.

However, Arawi consciously chose to incorporate a different kind of liking into his work—his original "liking." Things he can't explain but is drawn to, things he can only describe as "somehow," feel special because they can't be shared with anyone else. And because he can't grasp their true nature, his desire to explore them is sparked. Therefore, he focused on the "somehow" and placed that feeling at the center of his creative work.

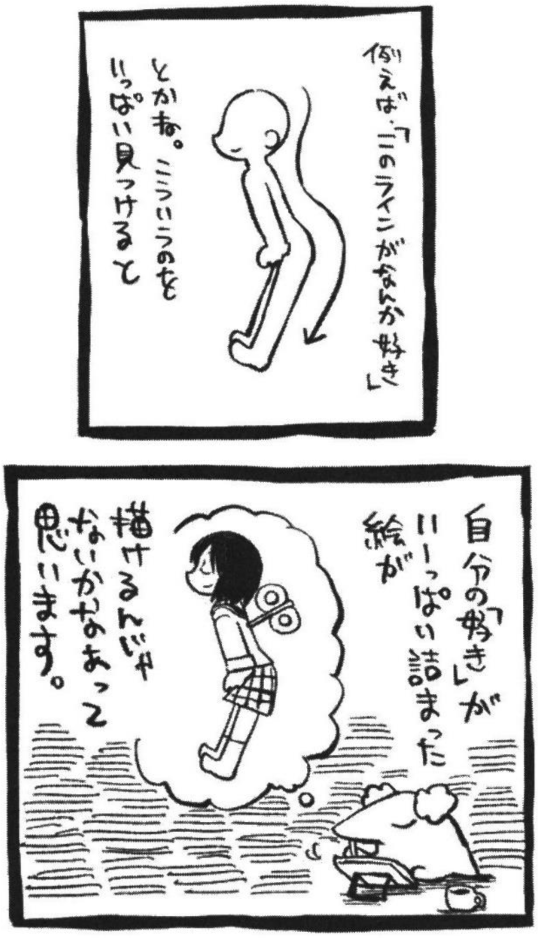
Arawi's self-confidence, which he gained from Nagata's writing, gave him the courage to create things that others might find difficult to understand. It was because he remained committed to these feelings that he held in his heart alone that this manga artist was able to acquire a truly unique style [8].

> ***This is difficult. Is it that I just like to create alone? No, this solitude is not a true sense of "loneliness." The nuance is difficult.***
> ***Do I have a desire to go to a different place from where everyone else finds fun? I feel like I draw and create manga with the hope that I can stay who I am and that viewers will be satisfied with that.*** [From an interview for this book]

In the previous section, we concluded that Arawi's artistic characteristic is his continuous creative process, which is guided by the feeling of "liking." While this definition is not wrong, it also applies to a certain extent to other artists, so it's not a complete explanation. Rather, his individuality is best summed up by his rejection of negativity and his pursuit of a personal sense of "liking" that cannot be shared with others.

Thus, the core essence that must be understood first can be summarized in a single sentence:

Arawi continues his creative work, guided by the feeling of "somehow liking" something.


例えば「このラインがなんか好き」
とかね。こういうのを
いっぱい見つけると
自分の「好き」が
いーっぱい詰まった
絵が
描けるんじゃ
ないかなあって
思います。

From Helvetica Standard note, "Q&A Session #4" (質問応答 第 4 回), June 16, 2021: In response to a reader's question, "I want to become good at drawing like you, sir. What should I start with?", Arawi recommended they "gather lots of things you like."

The "Somehow Good" Feeling That Cannot Be Put into Words #1

After impressing Arawi while working as a journalist for *Famitsū*, what path did Nagata follow? Shortly after the publication of the *Vana'diel Taizaiki* book, he actually changed jobs to a company run by copywriter Shigesato Itoi (Tokyo Itoi Shigesato Office, now Hobonichi Co., Ltd.). Itoi, having recognized Nagata's talent, had headhunted him.

At his new workplace, Nagata began a series of review articles for the ported version of the game *Mother* (The title in the United States is "EarthBound Beginnings"), which Itoi had helped develop, titled "Pocket ni 'Mother'" (ポケットに『Mother』, "Pocket-sized 'Mother'"). However, as he was no longer a game magazine journalist, his opportunities to write the kind of articles he used to write gradually decreased. As a result, Arawi's chances of following Nagata's work naturally became fewer.

It seemed that Nagata's influence would fade away, but a turning point came about seventeen years later. In June 2020, Arawi, by then a successful professional manga artist, contributed an essay manga to a booklet celebrating the 30th anniversary of the *Mother* game. In a twist of fate, one of the editors of this commemorative magazine, *Pollyanna*, was none other than Nagata, who was working under Itoi.

What's interesting is that *Mother* and Itoi were also works and people who had a huge influence on Arawi [9]. The manga he contributed to *Pollyanna* became a special project that connected these three figures: Itoi, Nagata, and *Mother*. Therefore, the following text will examine Arawi's relationship with *Mother* by referencing the essay manga "Mother" included in *Pollyanna* (for Itoi, see Section I of this book). Since this game is also related to the feeling of "somehow liking" something, it is a fitting conclusion to the "Prologue."

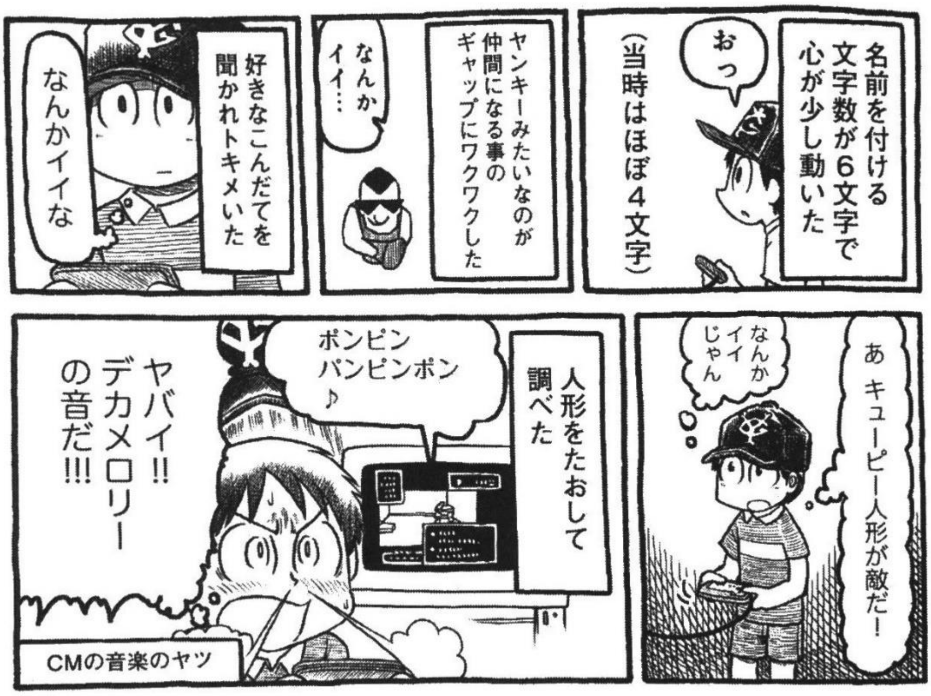
The first half of the essay manga recounts how Arawi, then in sixth grade, became obsessed with *Mother*. In 1989, young Arawi had the game's theme song, "Eight Melodies," stuck in his head from TV commercials and would often hum it. However, he says he wasn't very interested in the game itself. He felt it was a game for adults older than him because the setting was contemporary (1980s) America. Instead, he was drawn to the manga *Shiawase no Katachi* (しあわせのかたち, "The Shape of Happiness"), which was serialized in *Famicom Tsushin*, and the upcoming *Dragon Quest IV* (The title in the United States is "Dragon Warrior IV"), which had been announced at the time.

The turning point was an experience at a general supermarket [10] with his mother. At the time, supermarkets had Famicom Box consoles, which allowed you to play a game for 15 minutes for 100 yen. It was here that he happened to try *Mother*, which no one was playing, and was captivated by its unique world.

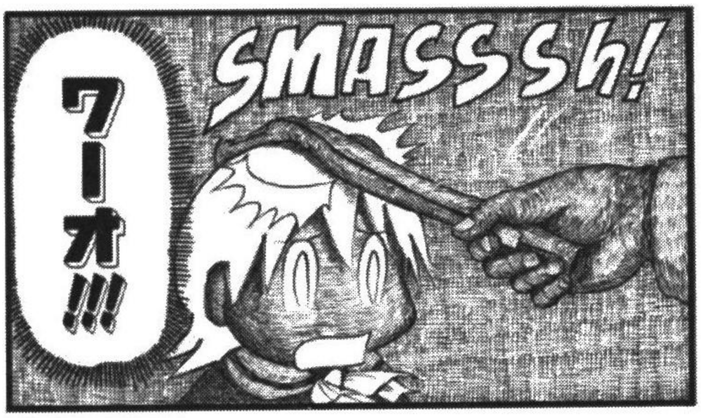
It is extremely significant that Arawi says he felt *Mother* was "somehow good." He fell in love with the details that were separate from the main storyline: the game's feature of asking your favorite food right after you start, the unexpectedness of a Kewpie doll attacking you at the very beginning of the game, and the concept of collecting "melodies" scattered throughout the world.

After his mother bought him *Mother*, Arawi played the game with care, feeling that it was his "secretly interesting thing." Although *Mother* is now well-known to a wide range of generations as of 2020 when Pollyanna was published, Arawi's experience in 1989 was that no one else around him was playing it. For this reason, he felt that it was a "game that only I found, that only I liked, and that was only mine."

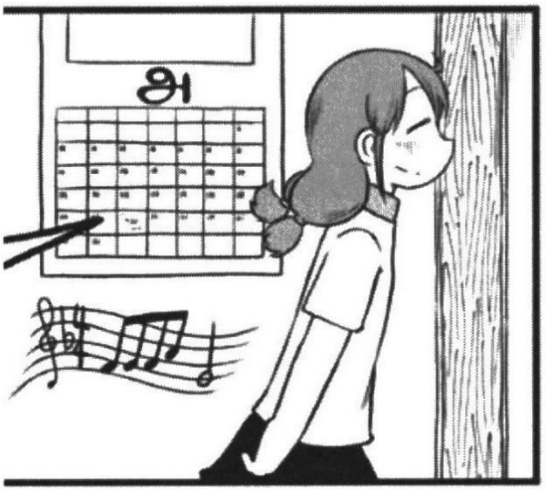
As we've seen, Arawi clung to the feeling of "somehow liking" something because he found important meaning in the idea of a liking that belonged only to him. This made him feel even more special about *Mother*. The combination of his "somehow" liking for the carefully crafted details and the exclusive feeling of being the only person he knew who was into the game made him fall deeply in love with *Mother* and left a lasting impression on him.


名前を付ける文字数が６文字で心が少し動いた
おっ
（当時はほぼ４文字）
ヤンキーみたいなのが仲間になる事のギャップにワクワクした
なんかイイ…
好きなこんだてを聞かれトキメいた
なんかイイな
あ キューピー人形が敵だ！
なんかイイじゃん
人形をたおして調べた
ポンピンパンピンポン♪
ヤバイ!! デカメロリーの音だ!!!
CMの音楽のヤツ

From *Pollyanna*, page 131: It depicts Arawi as a boy, excited about playing *Mother* for the first time.


ワーオ!!!
SMASSSh!

From *Nichijou*, Volume 1, page 77: This page includes a homage to the critical hit sound effect, "SMAAAASH!!," from the game *Mother*. The same expression also appeared in the illustration for the end credits of the anime version of *Nichijou*, "Episode 14" (on a sticker included with the limited edition of the DVD/Blu-ray, Volume 7).



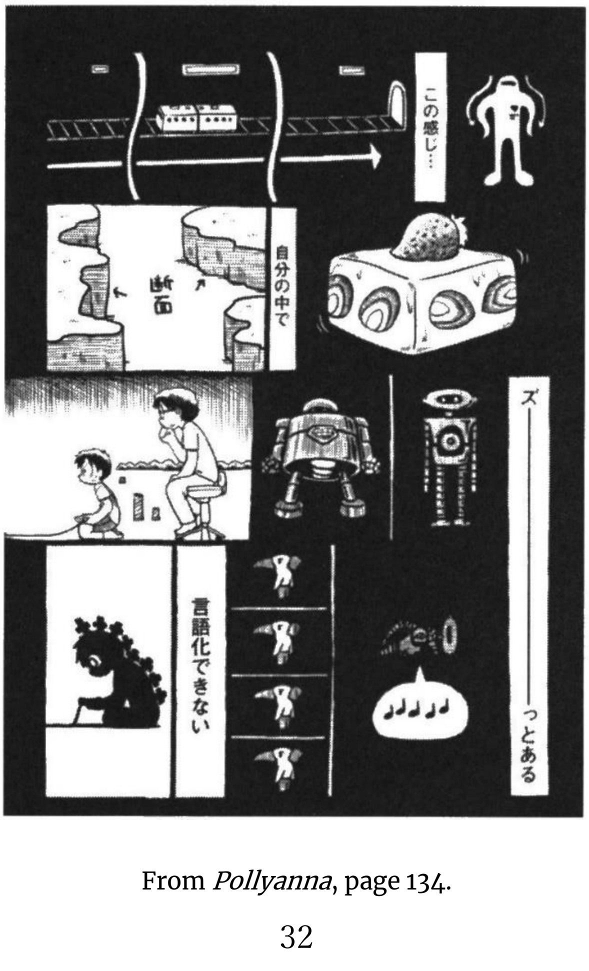
From *CITY*, Volume 11, page 117: The musical notes hummed by the character Riko Izumi are, judging by the staff, the first measure of "Eight Melodies." This panel was drawn around the same time as the *Mother* essay manga was being written (*Weekly Morning*, Issue 25, 2020, released on May 21). It is likely that Arawi included "Eight Melodies" in *CITY* because he had been thinking about it. Notably, the musical score cited in the manga is transposed to the key of F major. This is believed to be a reference to the school music textbook *Shinpan Ongaku 6* (新版音楽 6, "New Edition Music 6," published by Kyoiku Shuppan, 1992), which featured a transposed version of the "Eight Melodies" score.

The "Somehow Good" Feeling That Cannot Be Put into Words #2

After concluding the first half of the essay manga about his memories of elementary school, Arawi shifts to his present life 30 years later. It's 2020, and as a professional manga artist, he is in the midst of brainstorming a new essay manga about *Mother*.

He felt that fitting his deep emotional connection to the game into an eight-page manuscript would be a "battle of how much to cut out" since his memories of every detail were so vivid. He mulled over this problem but couldn't figure out how to structure the manga. Feeling stuck, Arawi decided to take a break and played the song "Eight Melodies," which had been uploaded to a video site. The familiar melody he used to hum as an elementary school student was soothing, and he listened to it for a while with an empty mind.

Suddenly, images from the game flashed in his mind: the design of the alien antagonists, the scenery as a train heading to a snowy town passes through a tunnel, a peculiar food item called strawberry tofu, and the bird-man and robot companions who, despite being in a game, could never be revived once they died... [11]. The scenes from Mother, which he remembered vividly even after thirty years, could only be described as "somehow good."


この感じ…
自分の中で
断面
ズーーーーっとある
言語化できない
♩♩♩♩♩

From *Pollyanna*, page 134.

Past memories came flooding back, overflowing all around him. As he felt himself being swept away by this torrent of memories, a single realization struck him. He realized that the "fluffy, interesting feeling" he gets when creating manga was the same as the feeling he had while playing *Mother* and thinking "I somehow like" all the details. In other words, he re-recognized that he was creating manga "guided by that 'somehow good' feeling."

Initially, Arawi thought the key to writing the essay manga was to carefully trim his memories. However, the final comic used a two-page spread to freely draw all the scenes that stood out to him, reproducing the way his memories of *Mother* had overflowed without any omissions.

The essay manga "Mother" was an arrangement of things that had left an impression on him, even though he couldn't quite explain why. This suggests that this manga can be seen as a prototype for all of Arawi's works, which are born from the feeling of "somehow liking" something.

Reflecting on his childhood memories, Arawi recalled that while he had yearned to be a manga artist even then, he still lacked the skill to finish anything. However, he continued, thanks to playing *Mother*, he was able to touch upon the essence of creation: the feeling of "somehow liking."

The thing that helped a frustrated elementary school student who couldn't draw manga was *Mother*. He felt that without encountering this game, he would have never understood the joy of creation and would not have picked up a pen again to draw manga as an adult. When he thought about this, an image came to his mind: a comical scene of himself lying in a hospital bed, receiving a blood transfusion from a giant game cartridge. The story concludes with the artist, in the comic, beginning to draw the manuscript for this essay manga.

The foundation for Arawi's pursuit of his own unique "liking" can be traced back to his childhood when he played *Mother*. The essay manga published in *Pollyanna* demonstrates that this artist's style has been unchanging from his youth to the present day. Therefore, in the main chapters that follow, we will delve into the details of what kind of things he came to "somehow like." From his childhood, Arawi was a boy with an exceptionally strong sensibility toward things he liked, and he was inspired by many things, nurturing the emotional foundation needed to create his later manga works.

For now, in "I. Early History," we will begin with his core experiences from when he was a young child, even before he encountered *Mother*, and trace the process through which his artistic foundation was formed.

---

[1]. Nagata worked on game articles and general-interest columns for *Famitsū* under the pen name "Kazeno-yo ni Nagata" (風のように永田, "Nagata, Like the Wind") from the late 1990s.

[2]. The incantation in the rakugo story "Shinigami" varies slightly depending on the performer, but the basic form is "ajarakamokuren-tekeretsunopa." In *Nichijou* Volume 8, "Nichijou no 133," Arawi later used this incantation as a phrase to break a hypnosis spell. The incantation "ajarakamokuren-tekerettsu no pa" is also used in the *Amemiya-san* story "Chapter 9: Let's Conquer Gunma!" published in the April 2023 issue of *Gessan*.

[3]. The catalyst for Arawi's fascination with European soccer was the former Paraguay national team player José Luis Chilavert. He became obsessed with foreign soccer players after being captivated by Chilavert's intense charisma and behavior during the 1998 FIFA World Cup in France. Because of this, Arawi says he still watches matches with a focus on players' interesting behaviors. From the interview "A Soccer Lover's Dream Story": "*I accidentally learned about José Luis Chilavert. When I looked him up, he was amazing. He would hit people if he didn't like something and even spit in people's faces. But in his home country, he was hailed as the next president. I thought, 'What is this guy?' At the '98 World Cup in France, Paraguay lost, and while everyone else was crestfallen, Chilavert went to each and every player, stood them up, and gave them words of encouragement. I thought, 'Wow, that's so cool!' [...] I often watch games with the mindset of trying to find the players' interesting quirks. Good plays are, of course, interesting in their own right, but for example, sometimes the camera shows the audience for a long time and the commentators don't say anything. When that happens, I get curious about who was caught on camera at that moment. Or scenes where a player spits on the pitch—I'll think, 'The amount of spit there is enough to stick to a uniform if he fell down.' Or I'll wonder what flavor gum Fergie is chewing today. I just like those kinds of things. It becomes a lot of fun when you watch with your own unique perspective.*"

[4]. In the bonus manga "Confession #2" (吐露②) included with *CITY* Volume 4, he also talks about his affection for game pieces and boards.

[5]. Another example is the essay manga "New Year's! A Series Filled with Things I Like #1" (新春！好きなモノで埋めるシリーズ①) from the February 2018 issue of *Monthly Newtype*, which is a work that simply lists things he likes. As the title suggests, Arawi introduces one item he was fond of at the time in each panel. Specifically, he lists many stationery items he uses for drawing manga, such as the digital notepad Pomera DM-100 (King Jim), the TUFF 0.9 mechanical pencil (Pentel), and the PIGMA FINE pen (Sakura Color Products). Other items, which are perhaps on his mind while he's drawing, include his bone conduction Bluetooth headphones (AFTER SHOKZ) and the past archives of the NHK Radio 2 program *Kishō Tsūhō* (気象通報, "Weather Report"), which he listens to for relaxation. "New Year's! A Series on Things I'm Glad I Bought" (新春！買ってよかったものシリーズ) and "It's a New Era! Top 3 Best Things I've Recently Received" (新元号だよ！最近頂いて最高だったモノ BEST 3) published in the February and May 2019 issues of *Monthly Newtype* also follow a similar format.

[6]. As the main text will explain shortly, Arawi speaks positively about works that don't have a dark atmosphere, using the term "pop." His own works, as a result of his approach of incorporating only what he likes, have also ended up with a bright atmosphere.

[7]. In a February 12, 2003 post on Arawi's website Himarayairuka, he writes, "What's good about Montecristo? The name is good. What's good about DiCaprio? The name is good," praising the sound of the American actor Leonardo DiCaprio's name.

[8]. To expand on this, it can be pointed out that for Arawi, expressing what he likes is connected to the issue of identity. Things that he can't explain why he's drawn to—things that can only be described as "somehow good"—reflect his individuality precisely because they can't be shared with others through language. Arawi was challenging himself to express himself through the articulation of things that only he likes.

[9]. In an October 26, 2011 tweet, Arawi says, "Mother 1 is my No. 1 favorite." This shows that *Mother* has remained particularly memorable among the many games he's played.

[10]. The general supermarket that Arawi visited at the time was the Ito-Yokado Maebashi store. The store opened in 1987 but closed in 2010. The store had already closed by the time he wrote the essay manga, and he added a note in the comic that it was "no longer there."

[11]. In the explanatory text for the end credits illustration of the anime *Nichijou* Episode 14 included in *Helvetica Standard Italic*, "Illustrations for the nichijou Animation," Arawi wrote: "I drew this because I wanted to try some American comic-style sound effects. 'smasssh!' is from the game 'EarthBound.' I particularly liked EVE and the Flying Men." EVE and the Flying Men mentioned here are the robot and bird-man companions mentioned in the main text who, once they die in the game, never revive.

I. Early History

It was at the age of 24 that Arawi seriously decided to become a manga artist. Considering that some artists of his generation were already successful, this was a slightly late start to chasing his dream.

However, his journey was far from a waste of time. The powerful individuality seen in his works was cultivated during the quarter-century of his life before he even aspired to be a manga artist.

His elementary and middle school years, when his foundational creative experiences occurred. His high school years, when he longed for a different path. The seven years of twists and turns after high school graduation.

Through an analysis of interviews and essays, we will trace the first half of his life that shaped him into the manga artist Keiichi Arawi.

Primary Experiences #1:
Birth and Elementary School Years (1977–1990)

Pop Media and a Nightly Prayer #1

In August 2016, Arawi participated in an interview with writer Barubora [1] for a "10th Anniversary of Manga Debut Small Project." During this interview, Arawi discussed his taste in pop music while selecting "10 summer songs." He defined "pop" as the opposite of minor-key, sad music, describing it as a feeling that "makes you want to dance while listening."

> ***It's a feeling that makes you want to dance while listening. I like funk and soul, so maybe that's the kind of feeling I like. I listen to it while I'm drawing, and I think it helps lift my spirits. [...] Rather than rock or punk, what should I say, that kind of groove? I don't really know the word for it, but I prefer those kinds of songs. [...] Minor key is no good. I just have to look for pop-ness in a song.*** [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs" (あらゐ&ばるぼら放談 なんとなく選んだ10曲)]

What's interesting about this statement is that he seeks "pop-ness" not just in music but in everything. He continues, saying he is confident he "can like anything" if he can find its "pop-ness" and that "if the pop-ness outweighs the minor-ness, then I can like it."

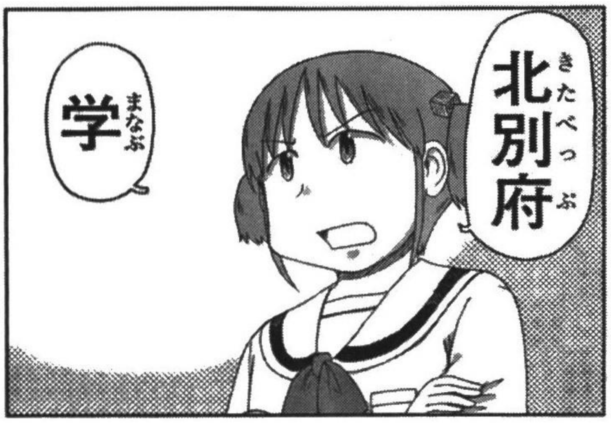
He cites the video games *Pro Yakyū Family Stadium* (プロ野球ファミリースタジアム, The title in the United States is "R.B.I. Baseball") and *Fushigi no Dungeon: Fūrai no Shiren 2: Oni Shūrai! Shiren-jō!* (不思議のダンジョン 風来のシレン 2 鬼襲来！シレン城！, "Mystery Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer 2 - Oni Invasion! Shiren Castle!") as examples of pop works. The former was the game he played most as a child, while the latter was a game he was so engrossed in as a young man that he forgot to eat and sleep.

> ***I'd have to say Famista is the game I played the most in my life. It's not scary. It's pop, haha. Famista. Also, Shiren the Wanderer. At first glance, it seems minor, but the naming sense, the music, and the sound effects are insanely pop. The name of the traps are things like "Kerokero Rain." The sound effects are pop too. The pop-ness of Shiren outweighs any minor-ness. But, I forget which game in the series it was, but I couldn't like it when the "Night" system was introduced.*** [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]

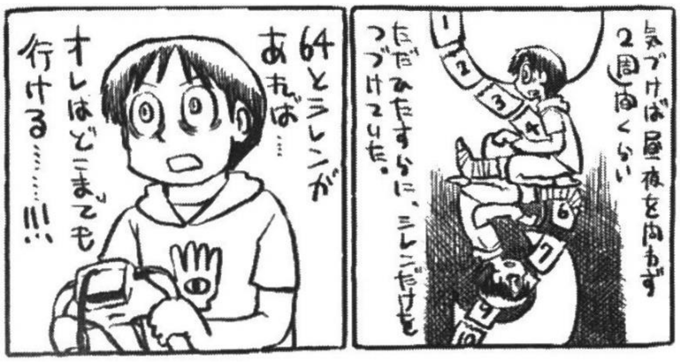
On the other hand, Arawi's self-analysis suggests that his fundamental motivation for loving pop things comes from a childhood experience of being terrified of the dark at night. He was born and raised in Tomita-machi, Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture, a small agricultural village surrounded by a rural landscape with no stores or streetlights open at night [2]. His confession, "Ghosts and stuff are scary, aren't they?" is filled with the earnest feelings of his youth.

> ***If I can find the pop-ness, I'm confident I can like anything. You know Super Mario Bros.? I don't like the castles (that appear in stage 1-4). If stages 1-1 to 1-3 are major, the castle is minor, right? [...] That's scary. This is scary*** [3]***. Ghosts and stuff, they're scary, aren't they? That's where it comes from. I'm bad with minor. Since I lived in the countryside, the nights were dark. And that was scary. That might be the cause of it.*** [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]

For Arawi, the "minor key" referred to things that were terrifying and reminded him of the pitch-black night. Because of this, he sought out works with a pop style that could blow away his fear of the dark.


北別府（きたべっぷ）
学（まなぶ）

From *Nichijou*, Volume X, page 99: In the author's notes for a story where a character's consciousness is swapped with that of real-life professional baseball player Manabu Kitabeppu, Arawi writes about his memories of the game *Pro Yakyū Family Stadium*: *"In Famista (for the Famicom), Kitahefu's curveball and slider curve so incredibly much!!"*


気づけば昼夜を問わず
2週間くらい
ただひたすらに、シレンだけを
つづけていた。
1
2
3
4
6
7
9
10
64とシレンが
あれば…
オレはどこまでも
行ける……!!

From *Continue* Volume 59, *Sennen Ōkoku* (千年王国, Thousand Year Kingdom): This is an essay manga that details his memories of being engrossed in the game *Fūrai no Shiren 2*.

Incidentally, Arawi does not apply this pop-versus-minor dichotomy to his manga. However, this way of thinking seems to concisely express his values regarding manga. This is because, after his professional manga serialization was decided for *Nichijou*, he wrote about his relationship with manga in the following way:

> ***When I was in elementary and middle school, I would always read manga before I went to sleep.***
> ***I wanted to go to sleep with a happy feeling, even a little bit.***
> ***I don't know why, but as a child, I was scared of war.***
> ***I didn't understand it well, but it was just a vague feeling.***
> ***So I wanted there to be a world without war.***
> ***Also, I didn't want to be instantly gone in an atomic bomb.***
>
> ***At night.***
> ***On a night when I could only hear the sound of the rain.***
> ***I would burrow into my futon and read manga,***
> ***and I would think, "Ah, how wonderful***
> ***my house, futon, and manga are."***
> ***That feeling continues to this day.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "The End of Aretha Franklin" (アレサ・フランクリンの終末), December 1, 2006 [4]]

The darkness of the night and the cold rain outside, separated only by the wall of his house. The images of death and war that cast a deep shadow on his heart. While he was afraid of these ideas that appeared when he closed his eyes, when he was wrapped in his warm futon and reading manga, he could fall asleep in a happy mood. "Ah, how wonderful my house, futon, and manga are."

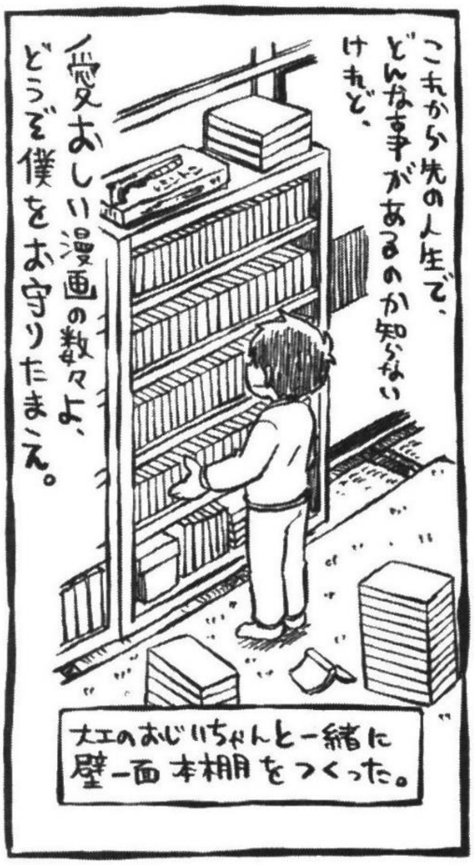
For Arawi at that time, manga was the most pop medium of all. The young boy was receiving a certain power from manga that could scatter his minor-key imaginations.

The dark images of the outside world that he imagined as a child can be confirmed in other writings.

> ***When I was in 2nd or 3rd grade in elementary school, I thought the entire world, besides Japan, was America. I was convinced that eventually, we would go to war with America and another atomic bomb would be dropped on Japan. At night, before I went to bed, I would pray to my pillow, "Please don't let war happen," before I fell asleep.***
> [From *Homare* afterword, "Yūkyū no Kaze" (悠久の風, "Eternal Wind")]

As a child, Arawi prayed for peace and read manga. If he read manga believing that his fear would turn into joy, then reading could also be seen as a form of prayer. The pop-ness he found in the world of manga was more than just a preference; it was a heartfelt wish entrusted with his plea, "Please don't let war happen."

Furthermore, he recalls that the sense of peace he felt while reading manga before bed has not faded with age but "continues to this day." As both a prayer and a pop medium, manga still lives on in his heart.


これから先の人生で、
どんな事があるのか知らない
けれど、
愛おしい漫画の数々よ、
どうぞ僕をお守りたまえ。
大工のおじいちゃんと一緒に
壁一面本棚をつくった。

From Helvetica Standard note, "Manga Michi 05: The Abyss of Submission # 1" (漫画道 05: 奈落の投稿編 1), July 15, 2021: The elementary school Arawi offers a prayer to the manga filling his wall-to-wall bookshelf. Text translation: *"Whatever may happen in the life ahead, oh, my precious manga, please watch over me."*

Pop Media and a Nightly Prayer #2

Arawi once wrote the following on his Twitter account:

> ***I had the same old dream again for the first time in a while. The world outside of Japan had become America.*** [From a Twitter post on February 8, 2012]

Due to the nature of Twitter, which limits posts to 140 characters, not much is said about the content of the "same old dream." However, it is easy to infer what it was. Arawi was tormented by a nightmare from his elementary school days, a nightmare of war breaking out.

"The world outside of Japan" has become America, and the two countries fall into a state of war. Eventually, an atomic bomb is dropped, and many people, including those he holds dear, lose their lives. We've already confirmed that these dark images of death and war weighed on his heart. The sensitive boy was haunted by the fear of war at night, and for that reason, he had to pray for peace and seek solace in pop manga.

But where did Arawi's fear of war come from? Born in 1977, he would not have directly experienced the Asia-Pacific War. The answer to this question lies in his essay "Fragments of Daily Life 5: Scary Pictures Even in the Daytime" (日々の断片 5: 昼でも怖い絵). In the essay, he says that when he was in the lower grades of elementary school, he was terrified by Keiji Nakazawa's manga *Barefoot Gen*.

Barefoot Gen is an anti-war manga that reflects the author's experience of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. The work, which grapples with the horrors of war and atomic bombs, contains many brutal depictions. Arawi probably picked up *Barefoot Gen* at his elementary school's library without much thought. However, this manga was the complete opposite of pop; it was the ultimate expression of "minor." The fear of death and war instilled by *Barefoot Gen* mixed with his pre-existing fear of the night. In his mind, the darkness of the night morphed into a more terrifying presence. This led to his primary experience of going to bed every night while praying, "Please don't let war happen."

In the essay, looking back at his elementary school memories, he recalls that besides *Barefoot Gen* and the darkness, "there was a lot of fear around me."

> ***The nights in Gunma are dark. Genuinely dark. The area around my family home is pitch black. The mountains, trees, cemeteries, rice fields, and forests that surround us in all four directions turn into a perfect, inky black that covers the entire area.***

> ***In spring and summer, if you ride a bicycle in the darkness, there's a good chance a bat will fly into your face.***
> ***In autumn and winter, the wind blows down from Mt. Akagi. The gusts are terrible, and the wind runs through the pitch-black with a roaring sound.***
> ***The rerun of the anime Humanoid Monster Bem that aired in the evening.***
> ***The UFO specials that aired during prime time.***
> ***The widespread prophecies of Nostradamus.***
> ***The frequent thefts of cars and bicycles.***
> ***Barefoot Gen, which I accidentally read in the elementary school library.***
> ***Otogirisou, which Chunsoft released with great fanfare.***
> ***The Seichō Matsumoto books lined up in my father's study.***
> ***There was a lot of fear around me.***
> [From Helvetica Standard note, "Fragments of Daily Life 5: Scary Pictures Even in the Daytime," February 17, 2021]

The boy with a delicate sensibility felt fear from many things. That's why he needed the help of pop and fun manga to protect himself.

And this habit has continued into his adulthood. This is evident in the body of work that would come to have a great influence on him later. While the genres of things Arawi likes are diverse, they are all either works that are visibly bright and humorous or works that, even if they seem dark, are filled with vitality underneath.

Arawi's pop orientation is also evident in his own works. The gag manga he has been creating since his professional debut intentionally incorporates elements such as a cute art style and good pacing.

Also, as will be explained in more detail later, he stated that even when he began working on his practice manga, he wanted to create "surreal and warm stories" [5]. From the very beginning of his journey to become a manga artist, he intended to make "lightness" the core of his creative work.

For readers familiar with his post-*Nichijou* works, the sense of pop and the "feeling that makes you want to dance" that runs through Arawi's work might seem self-evident. However, what about when we consider his primary experience of reading manga to ward off the darkness, death, and war? A new perspective emerges: a prayer for happiness is contained within the bright style.

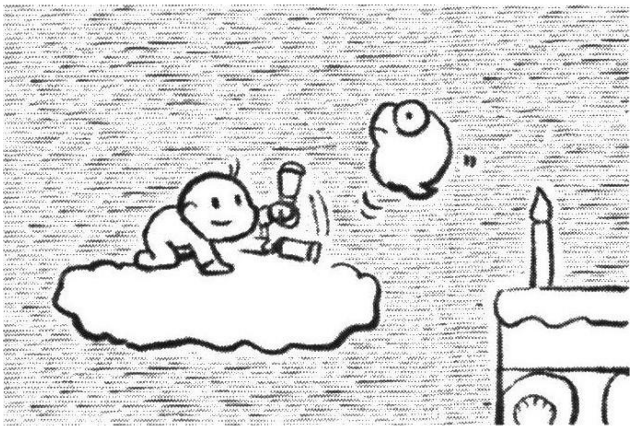
> ***So that everyone involved with me***
> ***can be happy!!***
> ***Just kidding.***
> [From the afterword to the 2008 version of *Shiawase no Kakudo*]

"Pop fun" and "warm stories." While he says "Just kidding," with a playful air, the current Arawi has consistently followed these themes, continuing to draw manga that is as close as possible to the ideal he sought as a child.

Of course, grand prayers like "Please don't let war happen" don't appear in his manga. However, it's not hard to imagine that if Arawi as a child had read his own works like *Nichijou*, *CITY*, or *Amemiya-san*, he would have been able to sleep soundly.

This artist has consistently depicted a peaceful and happy world, a fact that is easy to overlook because it is so normalized within his work.

> ***"I believe that manga is a wonderful space that is neither reality nor a dream."***
> [From Yomiuri Shimbun Evening Edition, "Hon Yomiuri-do Comic-kan: 'Nichijō-kei Manga's Popularity'" (本よみうり堂コミック館『日常系マンガが人気』), November 28, 2011]



From Helvetica Standard note, "Fragments of Daily Life 5: Scary Pictures Even in the Daytime," February 18, 2021: An illustration of the baby character Upa from the game *Bio Miracle Bokutte Upa*. In the essay, after listing games that he found scary, Arawi introduced this game as a bright and fun counterpoint, writing, "It was a game where the baby protagonist fought cute enemies on sweets with a rattle as a weapon, as if the period of terrifying-only software was a lie. The catchy background music purified all my past scary experiences. In short, it was the best."

The Beginning Rain and the Beginning of Drawing

As a boy, Arawi maintained his peace of mind by embracing fun, pop creations, even as he was haunted by the shadows of dark nights and war. Let's now look at this core experience from a different angle. While it's a repeated quote, let's revisit his recollection once more:

> ***At night.***
> ***On a night when I could only hear the sound of the rain.***
> ***I would burrow into my futon and read manga,***
> ***and I would think, "Ah, how wonderful my house, futon, and manga are."***
> ***That feeling continues to this day.***

It's interesting that he reframes the dark night, which was so deeply etched in his mind, as a night where he could "only hear the sound of the rain." The darkness likely blocked his sight, leaving him with only the sound of the cold rain. If anyone else in the house had been awake, he would have heard the sounds of their lives. We can therefore imagine that his family was asleep, and he couldn't ask for help even if he felt lonely. "A night when I could only hear the sound of the rain" highlights the boy's solitude, the kind of night he had to endure all by himself.

At first glance, it seems the rain's only purpose in this recollection is to emphasize the terror of the night. However, Arawi's feelings about rain were a bit more complex. In an interview for this book, he said he has always liked the feeling of being in a situation where "it's raining and no one is around."

> ***I've always had this longing for the feeling of "being alone in a situation where it's raining and no one is around." I just... I like the whole thing, including the part of me that likes this kind of rainy situation. Maybe it's narcissism, but I feel like rain is the "zero" point where I start making something.*** [From an interview for this book]

Arawi didn't necessarily dislike lonely moments with nothing but the sound of rain. Of course, he would have wanted to avoid a situation where he had to spend the night alone in the dark. But he says he loves the very act of standing alone in the rain. He also explains that the root of this feeling lies in another core experience:

> ***When I was a kid, at my grandmother's house, there was a time when everyone had gone to work, and I was the only one there. It was pouring rain that day, and all I could really hear was***

> ***the sound of the rain. There was the smell of dust, the dim room, and the sound of the rain. It felt like this world was filled with the feeling that "if I started something here, it would all be mine."***
> ***When I think about a world that is only mine, the image of rain is always attached to it. I think rain has really shaped a very important part of me.*** [From an interview for this book]

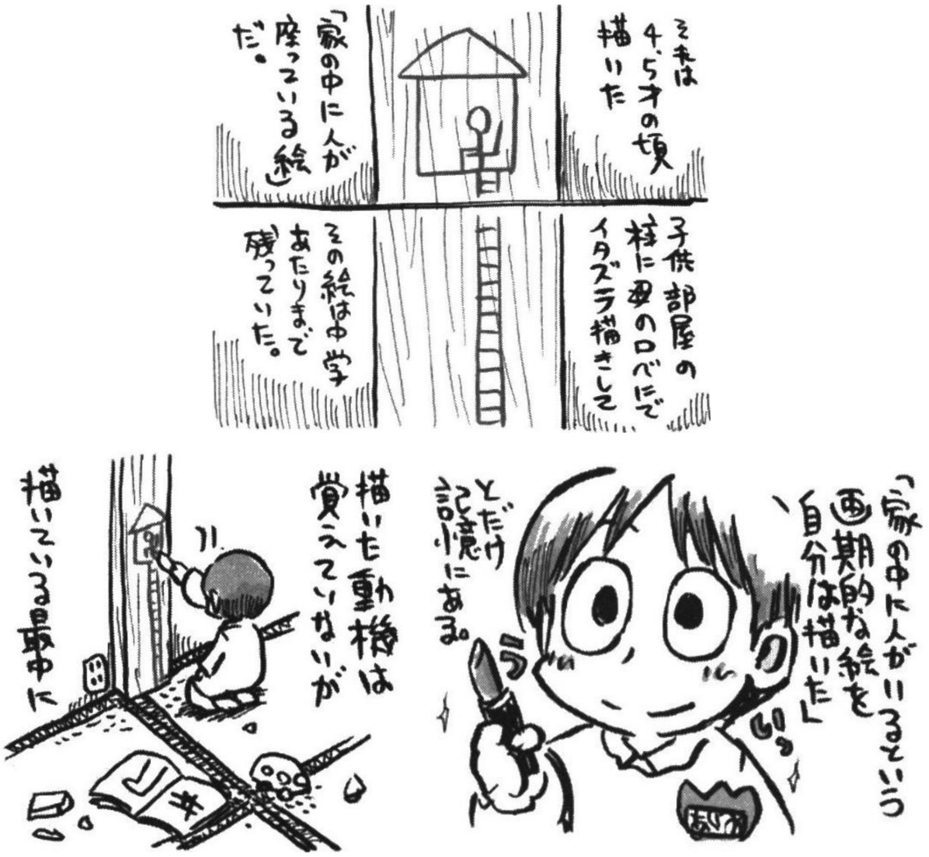
A situation where no one is around and he can't go outside to play because of the rain. It created the illusion that only his room was cut off from the outside world—as if the rain had created a "world that was only his," where no one else could enter. It was because he felt this way that he had such a special affection for rainy days.

While not explicitly stated in the interview, Arawi likely began to draw while immersed in this solitude. The "world that was only his," cut off from his surroundings by the rain, evoked a sense of omnipotence—the feeling that "if I started something, it would all be mine." It was the perfect setup for a child to pick up a pen and become absorbed in scribbling. The drawings he made at the time are no longer in existence, but the experience of creating in a world that was only his may have quietly whispered the joy of creation into his ear.

Let's also look at one more memory related to drawing from his childhood. In the essay manga "Confession #9: My Oldest Memory of Drawing" (吐露⑨ 絵を描いた最古の記憶), he talks about his earliest drawing. As a kindergartener, he "borrowed" his mother's lipstick and drew a doodle on the wall with the composition of "a person sitting inside a house." This was, as far as he can remember, the very first picture he ever drew.

Arawi doesn't remember the exact reason why he drew a "person sitting inside a house." However, when we consider it alongside the rainy day anecdote, we can guess what he was trying to express. As a child, he felt a certain comfort in the solitude that came when his family left the house. So he decided to draw a person, just like him, secluded inside a house.

This stick figure in the drawing may just seem like a person sitting indoors. But perhaps it was truly enjoying its freedom and alone time more than anyone. His satisfaction in having "drawn a revolutionary picture" likely came from feeling that he had captured the exhilarating solitude he himself experienced. The child who enjoyed doodling would one day become a successful professional manga artist, creating countless "worlds that were only his" from inside his home. In that sense, his very first picture of "a person in a house" had a strange, prophetic meaning, foreshadowing his own future. The figure in the drawing was, in fact, a representation of his own destiny.


それは4.5才の頃描いた
「家の中に人が座っている絵」だ。
子供部屋の柱に母の口べにでイタズラ描きして
その絵は中学あたりまで残っていた。
「家の中に人がいるという画期的な絵を自分は描いた」
とだけ記憶にある。
ラ
じっ
描いた動機は覚えていないが
描いている最中に

From "Confession #9: My Oldest Memory of Drawing," a bonus manga included with the first-edition purchase of *CITY* Volume 5. Text Translation: *"That's a picture from when I was four or five, of a person sitting in a house. While the original motivation escapes me, I vividly remember the feeling during the process—a sense that I had made a revolutionary discovery by depicting a person within those four walls."*

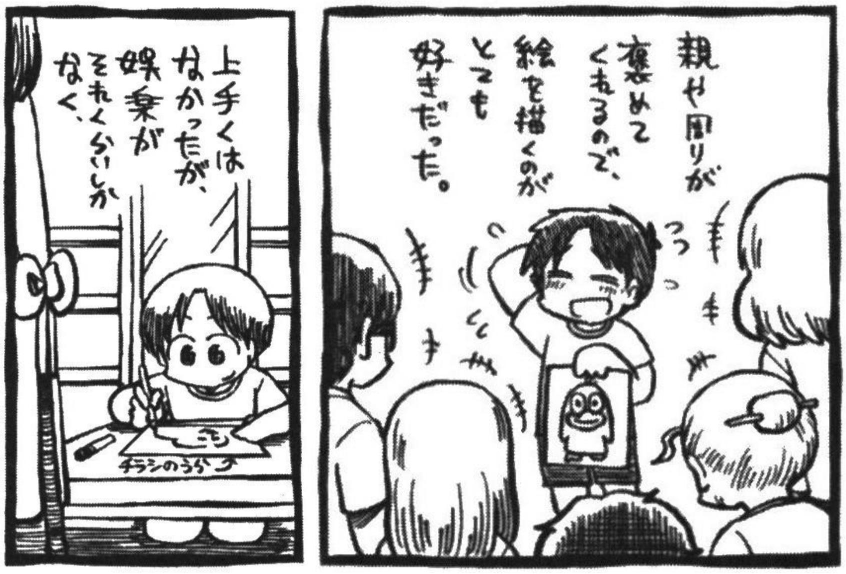
Aiming for a Place Different from Anyone Else #1

We have looked at two of Arawi's primary childhood experiences: his fear of the dark and the sense of solitude he felt listening to the sound of the rain. These two feelings are deeply etched into the core of his being, even as a manga artist today. From his fear, he developed a preference for pop brightness to counter it, and from his solitude, he learned the joy of creating things on his own.

Up to this point, we have focused only on his introverted nature, so now we will shift our focus to another aspect of his personality. While it's true that Arawi loved solitude and drawing, he was never truly alone after he finished a piece. He was surrounded by many relatives who also loved to draw and create manga.

During summer family gatherings, they would often show each other their drawings and receive praise. Thanks to this environment, where he was fortunate to be recognized by others through his art, Arawi was able to avoid withdrawing into his shell [6].

From there, Arawi developed a clear objective: to entertain the people in front of him with his drawings. He began filling his sketchbook with doodles that everyone could pass around and read. The first work that the future manga artist ever shared with the outside world was born out of a warm and friendly family gathering.


上手くはなかったが、娯楽がそれくらいしかなく、
チラシのうら
親や周りが褒めてくれるので、絵を描くのがとても好きだった。

From the Helvetica Standard note, "Manga Michi 01: Childhood Frustration # 1" (漫画道 01: 幼少期挫折編) posted on July 1, 2021.

> ***We used to have a family-owned cottage, and in the summer, all of our relatives would gather there. It's strange when I think about it now, but everyone at the cottage would spend their time drawing or creating manga. I think that the primary experience of me drawing doodles for others to see was the beginning of my journey as a "manga artist."*** [From an interview for this book]

Drawing in order to entertain the person in front of him. This is a positive creative motivation that serves as a counterbalance to his earlier need for pop manga to drive away the image of the dark night. What started as drawing for his own satisfaction was transformed into a desire to be seen by others when he joined a gathering of creatively inspired relatives.

This pattern of being stimulated by a creative environment can also be seen in his participation in Comitia, an independent manga exhibition and sales event, after he became an adult. The event, where creators gather to present their works and get immediate feedback from visitors, is, despite the difference in scale, an extension of those childhood art-sharing sessions. The reason Arawi honed his skills through Comitia after aspiring to become a manga artist may be that those childhood art-sharing sessions suited his personality so well.

In another interview, he said about his creative process, "It's the same feeling as 'pass-around manga' that we used to do in elementary school. That's the basic vibe." The creative activities he devoted himself to as a child were still very much alive as his primary experiences [7].

Among his creative relatives, two in particular were significantly involved in Arawi's manga career: Sekiguchi-kun and Hiro-chan.

His cousin Sekiguchi-kun served as his first assistant from the beginning of the Nichijou commercial serialization until the first volumes were released. This relative played a role in supporting Arawi as he began his career as a professional manga artist.

Sekiguchi-kun's presence can also be seen in the "Arawi-darake no Keiichi Matsuri" (あらゐだらけのけいいち祭り, "The Arawi-Full Keiichi Festival") contest held to celebrate the release of the first two *Nichijou* volumes. A caricature of Sekiguchi-kun was included as one of the one hundred unique pin badge designs [8]. Along with Ogi-kun [9], who would later join as a second assistant, Sekiguchi-kun also served as the namesake for the *Nichijou* characters Sekiguchi and Ogi.

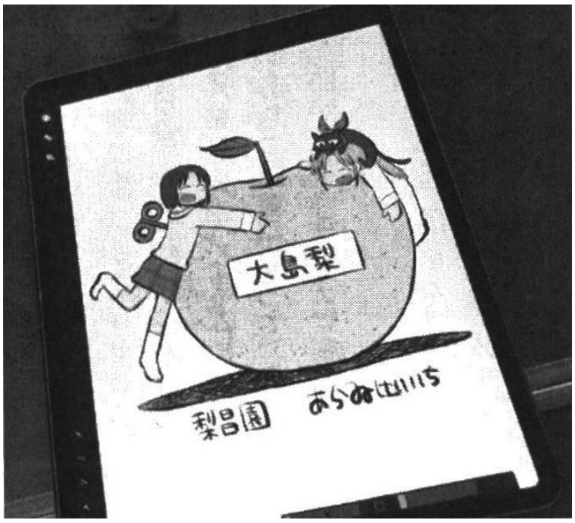
While he enlisted the help of Sekiguchi-kun after he became a pro, Hiro-chan had a tremendous influence on him before he was even a manga artist. Hiro-chan, Sekiguchi-kun's older brother and two years Arawi's senior, was always creatively inspired and surprised Arawi.

Most notably, Hiro-chan provided a crucial inspiration for the title of "My Ordinary Life" (「日常」). The title of a manga Hiro-chan drew as a student was one of the sources of inspiration for the series [10].

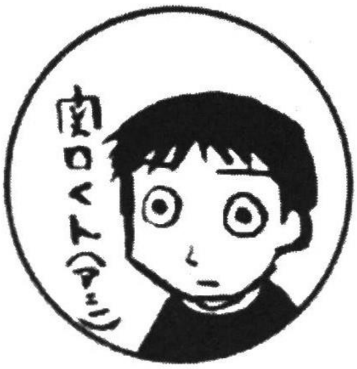
> ***One reason was that "My Ordinary Life" felt like a title where I could do anything, but also, the brother of my former assistant, who used to help me out, had drawn a manga titled Nichijou for fun in a notebook. I was shown it a long time ago, and I thought it was a really cool title, so I think it came from there.*** [From *Chorus*, "The History of Manga Vol.23: Keiichi Arawi" (まんがに歴史あり第23回 あらゐけいいち), March 2009 issue]

While their names were not mentioned in the article, the "former assistant" was Sekiguchi-kun, and his brother, who "drew manga for fun in a notebook," was Hiro-chan. According to an interview for this book, the manga Hiro-chan wrote in the notebook at the time was fan art for the manga series *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*.

However, in that same interview, Arawi said that he had completely forgotten about the old memory when he decided on the title for his serialized manga. Yet, he still admitted that the memory of Hiro-chan's manga may have been imprinted on his subconscious.



An illustration released during the "Kumomadori Radio" broadcast on February 10, 2020. Arawi provided the Nichijou illustration to "Riboen Sekiguchi," the Ōshima pear shop owned by his relative Sekiguchi-kun's family.



The "Sekiguchi-kun" pin badge. One of the prizes prepared for the "Arawi-darake no Keiichi Matsuri" event.

Aiming for a Place Different from Anyone Else #2

Hiro-chan, the relative who had such a big influence on Arawi, released a free video game in 2007, around the same time *Nichijou* began its serialization. It was a roguelike game based on the manga *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure* called "Diavolo no Daibōken" (ディアボロの大冒険, "Diavolo's Great Adventure"). Despite being an unofficial fan game, its high quality and meticulous detail earned it a passionate following among dedicated *JoJo* fans (it is no longer publicly available).

Arawi praised Hiro-chan's skill at making games and said that he had shown exceptional talent from a young age.

> ***I had a relative named "Hiro-chan" who was two years older than me, and I spent a lot of time playing with him when I was a kid. Hiro-chan was good at drawing and could create manga. He could read difficult books and was also smart. Most of all, he was very good at making games. Card games and board games. Games where you used cards to go on adventures in the real world, and so on. He was just incredibly creative from a young age. His card game made with an English vocabulary notebook was especially fun. He drew the art with his own hands and created the game with his own hands. And he did it with an English vocabulary notebook that you could buy anywhere. Every time I went up a grade and my ability to comprehend things got better, I'd start to realize just how amazing Hiro-chan was for creating everything all by himself, and it would make me dizzy.*** [From Helvetica Standard note, "Play and Illusion" (ごっこと幻影), March 1, 2021]

In another magazine interview, Arawi also mentioned the "card game made from an English vocabulary notebook" that Hiro-chan created in elementary school. When asked, "What is one item that captivated you?", he named Hiro-chan's game.

> ***"Bolt Quest"... It was a card game that my relative Hiro-chan made in elementary school. It was so much fun that I made the exact same thing and made it popular in my class. Everyone in my class would say, "Arawi-kun's game is so much fun!" and even though I was overjoyed, I also felt a simmering sense of frustration because I hadn't made it myself. "Alright! I'll make one from scratch myself!" It was also the item that awakened my passion for creation. The reason I draw manga today is because of Bolt Quest.*** [From *Studio Voice*, "One Item That Captivated Me" (私を虜にした一品), January 2009 issue]

Arawi was captivated by Hiro-chan's "Bolt Quest" (ボルトクエスト). At the same time, he felt a mix of complex emotions when he saw that the game's appeal had spread to others. He knew Hiro-chan's game was fun. He was proud that everyone in his elementary school was enjoying it. But he also felt, "I didn't make this."

The experience of seeing another talented person's creative work, feeling a sense of frustration that he hadn't made it himself, and burning with a spirit of rivalry became the third foundational experience etched into Arawi's life. He began to strongly believe that he wanted to create and present his own work and be recognized for it. At this moment, one could argue that Arawi's sense of identity was born.

The urge to create his own unique work is, in another sense, nothing less than aspiring to create something different from what others are doing. Arawi often refers to himself as a contrarian. And indeed, if we look at his desire to create things that only he can make and his aspiration to find a place different from anyone else's, that description fits him perfectly.

> ***I don't read much of today's manga anymore. I'm a contrarian at heart. I think the reason I was drawn to older manga is because not everyone was looking at it.*** [From *Studio Voice*, "Keiichi Arawi: Off-the-Charts, Otherworldly Creativity!" (あらゐけいいち 桁外れの異次元的創造力！), January 2008 issue]

> ***When I read manga and everyone's saying, "That part's so funny," I'll read it in a way that says, "I'm a better reader than you are," and I'll look for other funny parts. I'm a contrarian at heart, and I get frustrated (lol).*** [From *Chorus*, "The History of Manga Vol.23: Keiichi Arawi," March 2009 issue]

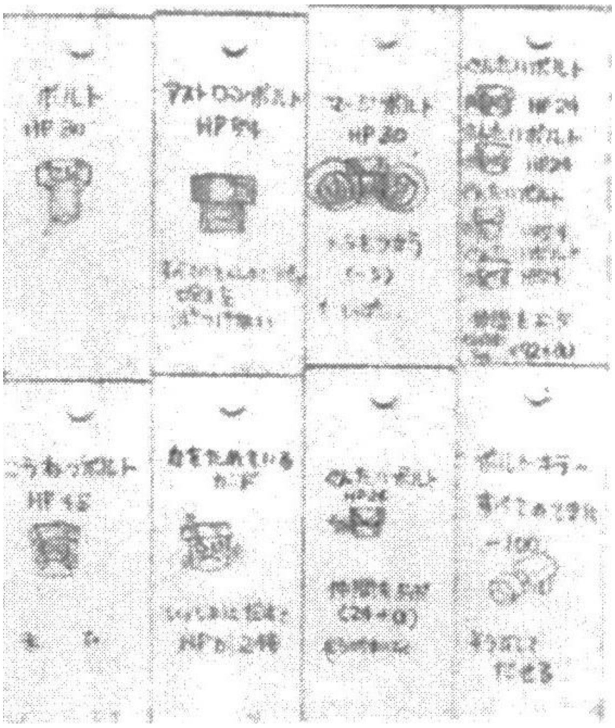
> ***I believe that things like my drawings, manga, appearance, and way of thinking change as the years go by, but the feeling that it would be a defeat to add a congratulatory message to this illustration (an illustration celebrating the 30th anniversary of Comitia) is something that hasn't changed since I first started going to Comitia. There are things that change and things that don't. I'm still the same laid-back contrarian. Congratulations on your 30th anniversary.*** [From the illustration of *Hirake!* in *Comitia 30th Chronicle*, Volume 1]

His ambition to do something different from others would later bear fruit in a series of manga works. He beautifully accomplished the vow he made as a boy: "Alright! I'll make one from scratch myself!"

However, the process of getting there was far from smooth. First, Arawi didn't have a clear path to becoming a manga artist and went through various twists and turns in his youth.

Even after he began to aim for a career in manga, he grappled with issues of originality. In the series of manga he published at Comitia, he questioned the very subjects of outside influences, his true self, and the act of creation itself.

What is one's true self? What is identity? And what is truly original manga? Arawi would resolve these questions in his own manga world after he became an adult.



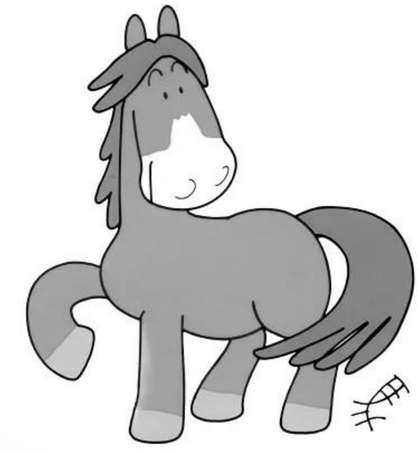
A photograph of an actual card from the card game "Bolt Quest," created by Hiro-chan and published in the January 2009 issue of *Studio Voice*.

Deformed Art Style and Detailed Backgrounds

A significant characteristic of Arawi's manga is the contrast between his cute, deformed art style and his meticulous background drawings. This dedication to art also originated from his childhood experiences.

First, one of the artistic influences from his youth was the work of manga artist and picture book author Noboru Baba. Growing up in Gunma Prefecture, Arawi had many opportunities to see Baba's mascot character, Gunma-chan (ぐんまちゃん) [11]. He was captivated by the simple, deformed style.

> ***As a kid, I saw this drawing (an illustration of Gunma-chan) all over town. As a child, I was so mesmerized by this perfect image of a horse that I would imitate it on my report cards, and my parents would get called into school for it, haha. I'm drawn to the warmth and explosiveness of Baba-sensei's hand-drawn art.*** [From *Monthly MOE*, "Special Interview: That Person's Picture Books" (スペシャルインタビュー あの人の絵本), February 2014 issue]



Gunma-chan by Noboru Baba.

Gunma-chan was designed as the mascot for the "38th National Sports Festival (Akagi National Sports Festival)" held in Gunma Prefecture in 1983. At the time, Arawi, who was just becoming aware of the world around him, must have often looked at the Gunma-chan illustrations placed all over town for the event's promotion.

He also loved Baba's picture books, such as *Kitsune Mori no Yama Otoko* (きつね森の山男, "The Mountain Man of Fox Forest") and the *11-piki no Neko* (11 ぴきのねこ, "Eleven Cats") series. He was so drawn to Baba's art that it became a cornerstone of his own artistic tastes.

Next, another influence on his deformed illustration style was the anime based on the works of Fujiko Fujio. In particular, the third anime series of *Obake no Q-Taro* (produced by Shin-Ei Animation) was appealing for Q-Taro's cheerful and cute visual design.

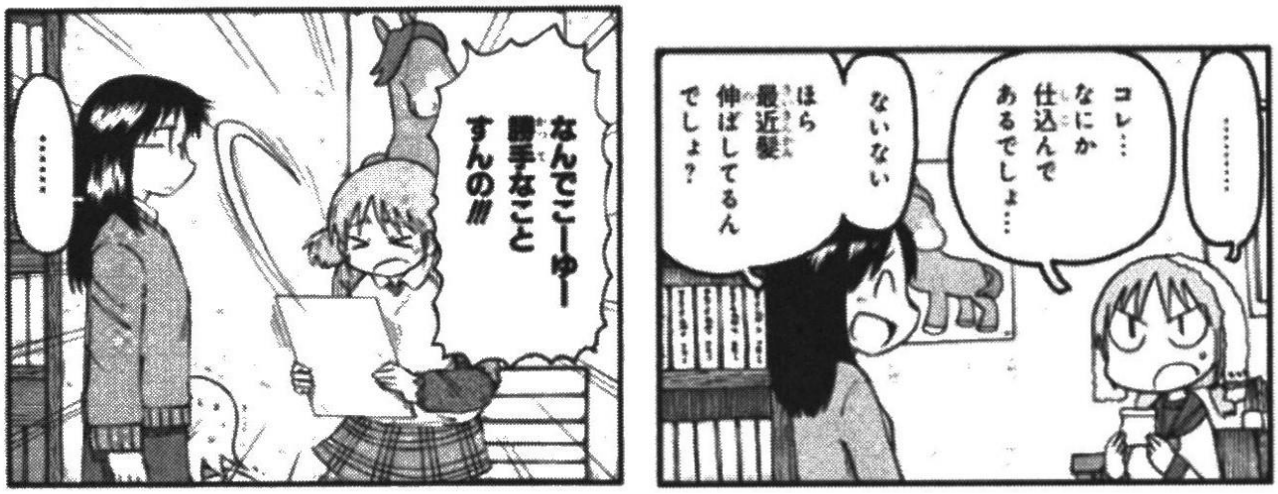
Just as with Gunma-chan, he recalls in his essay "Yokkun" that he loved drawing illustrations of Q-Taro [12]. In a dialogue with Fujiko Fujio A, one of the authors of *Obake no Q-Taro*, Arawi also said that the *Nichijou* character Hakase was based on Q-Taro [13].

Furthermore, Q-Taro played a role in rescuing Arawi from feelings of anxiety. As we've seen, Arawi at this time was afraid of the dark of night and the terrifying specters of death and war. However, the characters of *Obake no Q-Taro*, who were ghosts but were also incredibly cheerful, had a pop power that could blow away those fears.

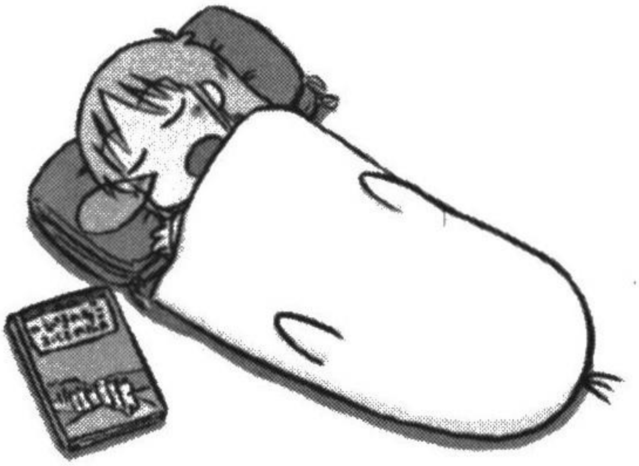
> ***The house next to my friend's house was a cemetery, so I had to walk home on a pitch-black street that faced a graveyard*** [14]***. And the games I was playing back then were only games that were terrifying for an elementary school student*** [15]. ***In a situation like that, the sense of relief I felt when I got home and watched Obake no Q-Taro was unmatched.*** [From an interview for this book]

At the time (1985-1987), *Obake no Q-Taro* aired at 6:45 p.m., which aligns with his memory of turning on the TV and seeing the anime when he got home. Thanks to the time he spent with Q-Taro and his friends during the period between saying goodbye to his friends and his parents coming home, Arawi was able to escape his fear of the night.

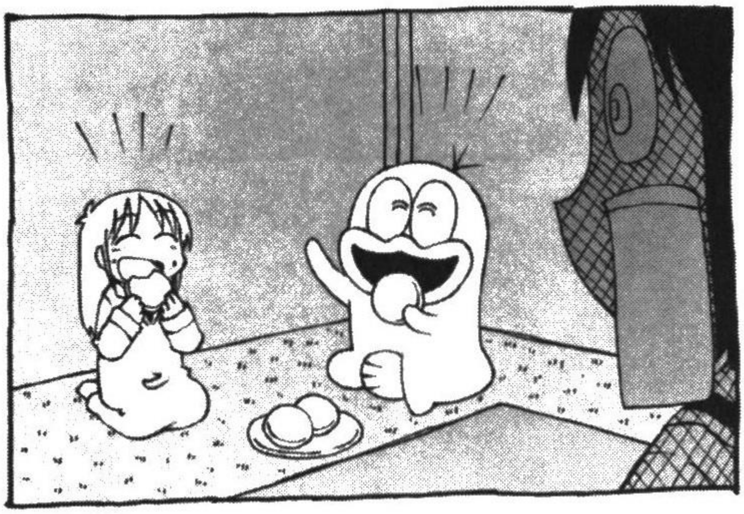
Other deformed characters he liked at the time included those from the German claymation series *Plonsters* and Sanrio character goods. He gained the courage to reject dark images from these cute characters as well [16].


………
コレ…
なにか
仕込んで
あるでしょ…
ないない
ほら
最近髪
伸ばしてるん
でしょ？
なんでこーゆー
勝手なこと
すんの!!!
……

From *Nichijou*, Volume 5, page 41 (left)/Volume 8, page 90 (right): A poster of Gunma-chan is displayed in Mio Naganohara's room.



An illustration titled "Baketron" was posted on Twitter on January 19, 2012. Baketron is the name of the fabric that Q-Taro wears over his head. The book next to the main character Hakase is Noboru Baba's *11-piki no Neko: Fukuro no Naka* (11 ぴきのねこ ふくろのなか, "Eleven Cats in a Bag").



An illustration posted on Twitter on May 13, 2016.

Besides deformed illustrations, Arawi was also greatly influenced by the detailed drawing style of picture book author Satoshi Kako, especially in his backgrounds. He recalls that the impression he got from the "page with lots of bread" in *Karasu no Pan-ya-san* (からすのパンやさん, The official English title is *Mr. Crow's Bakery*) and the illustration in *Uchū* (宇宙, "Space") that "compares various things like animals and buildings" was immeasurable [17].

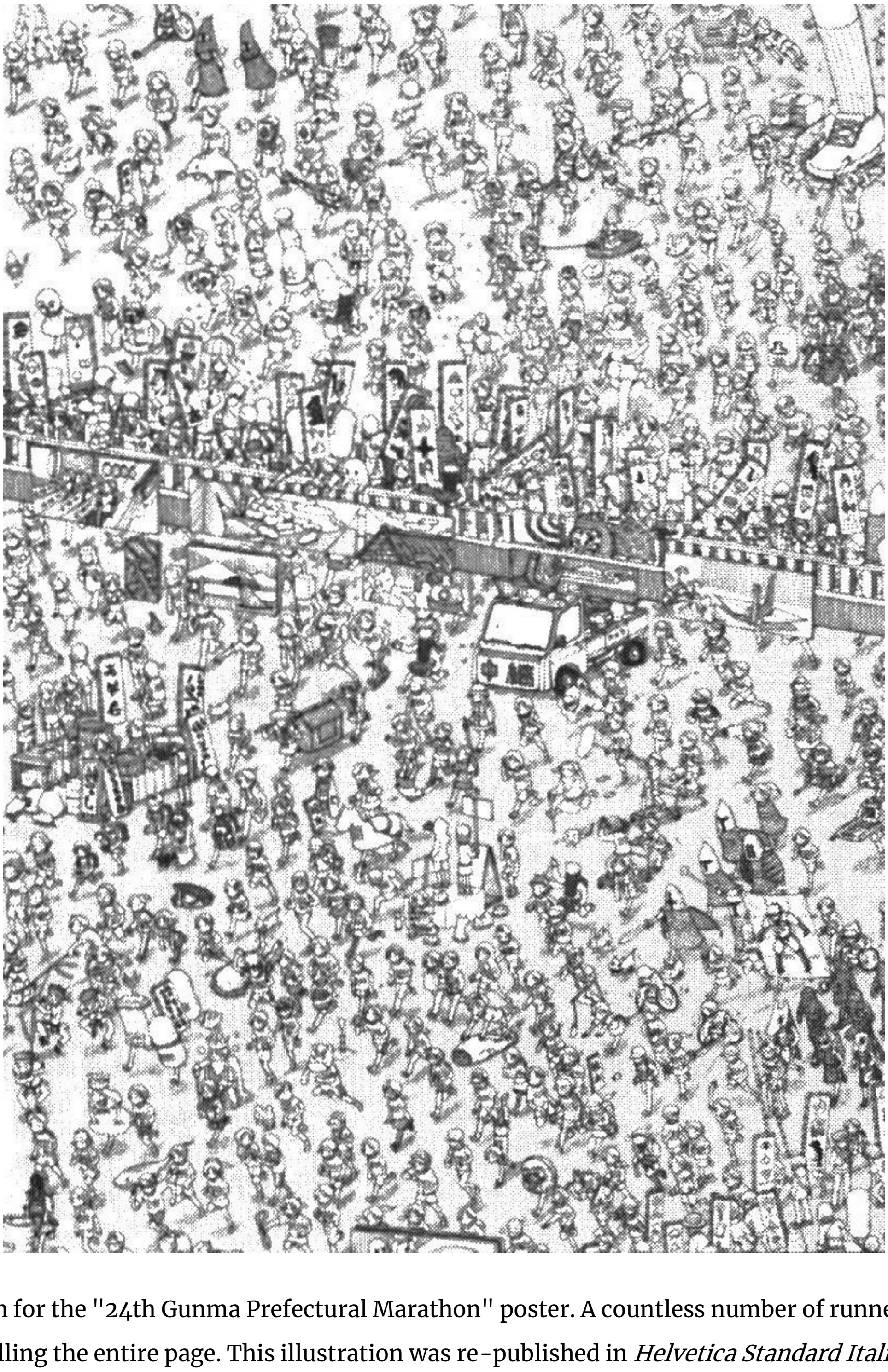
> ***I would look at Uchuu all the time when I was a kid. It compares all sorts of things like animals and buildings, and the drawings are so incredibly detailed. It thrilled me without me even knowing why. I still get excited now. I think I was captivated by the fact that everything drawn had a name. Since I also like drawing a lot of small details in my backgrounds, I might have been influenced by this. I also loved the page with the bread lined up in Karasu no Pan-ya-san. I would even put marks on my favorite breads...(lol)*** [From *Monthly MOE*, "Special Interview: That Person's Picture Books," February 2014 issue]

From elementary school, Arawi was drawn to illustrations with fine details and would even create crowded pictures with many characters himself. When he was in the 3rd or 4th grade and showing his doodles to his relatives and friends, he had already completed a dense, highly detailed drawing that filled an entire two-page spread of a notebook.

> ***When I was in 3rd or 4th grade, I remember I was so proud of a drawing I was absorbed in creating that filled a two-page spread of my notebook with so much density and a sense of***

> ***completion. I think the setting was someone's secret hideout inside a mountain. The mountain was home to many living things that lived leisurely lives. At the time, the Famicom was a huge craze, and even though I didn't have one, I tried drawing a jumble of things, including a lot of game packages. Maybe my preference for drawing lots of small details originates from this drawing. I was also definitely influenced by Where's Waldo? but I've forgotten if I read it around this time or later.*** [From an interview for this book]

The combination of a deformed aesthetic and a focus on detailed backgrounds. It's astonishing to see that the artistic characteristics that Arawi would later express in his own works were already glimpsed in his childhood. At least in terms of artistic style, he had already figured out his ideal from a young age.



An illustration for the "24th Gunma Prefectural Marathon" poster. A countless number of runners are drawn, filling the entire page. This illustration was re-published in *Helvetica Standard Italic*.

A Feeling Similar to "Moe" Strikes My Heart

As an elementary school student, Arawi found his ideal art style in the works of Noboru Baba, Fujiko Fujio, and Satoshi Kako, as well as in Sanrio characters.

However, he also reveals that he had another type of preference. One day, he picked up a copy of Weekly Shonen Jump in a bookstore and was completely floored by Akira Toriyama's manga, Dragon Ball, which was being serialized in it.

He looks back on this shock as a feeling "similar to the very first 'moe.'" He was utterly captivated by the designs of the boys and girls, which were charming in a way that was different from the simple art styles he had liked up to that point.

> ***I must have known about Dr. Slump from the anime, but the manga Dragon Ball was something very special to me. Even now, the art style that left an impression on me is from the period when I first read it, around the time of the battle with King Piccolo. It was probably Dragon Ball that gave me a feeling similar to the very first "moe."*** [From an interview for this book]

To add some context, Arawi encountered *Dragon Ball* early in its serialization. As the series continued, the main character, Goku, grew up and became muscular, and the characters' proportions became more realistic. But Arawi was captivated by the early art style, which had short characters and round, soft designs. Toriyama's art was especially deformed from the later stages of *Dr. Slump* to the beginning of *Dragon Ball*. After having already preferred simple art, his encounter with Toriyama's work intensified his taste for cute art styles.

Next, the "feeling similar to 'moe'" was directed toward the game parody manga, *Shiawase no Katachi*, serialized in Famitsū. He was deeply moved by the cuteness of the short-statured characters drawn by the author, Tamakichi Sakura.

> ***When I first saw Tamakichi Sakura's Shiawase no Katachi, I thought, "What a cute art style and what a funny manga! It's amazing!" Later on, I'd come to think, "Oh, it's like Fujio Akatsuka," but I didn't go in Akatsuka's direction; I'm still in Sakura's camp.*** [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]

In an interview for this book, he said he has a special fondness for the "Shiawase no Katachi Special," a series included in Volume 2 of the manga. The "Shiawase no Katachi Special" was a series of parodies of other games based on the world of *Dragon Quest III*. Since Akira Toriyama was the one who designed the illustrations for *Dragon Quest*, Arawi must have been aware of the connection between the artists he admired [18].

Thus, the cute designs of the characters, which became a major characteristic of Arawi's manga, were determined by the works of Akira Toriyama and Tamakichi Sakura.

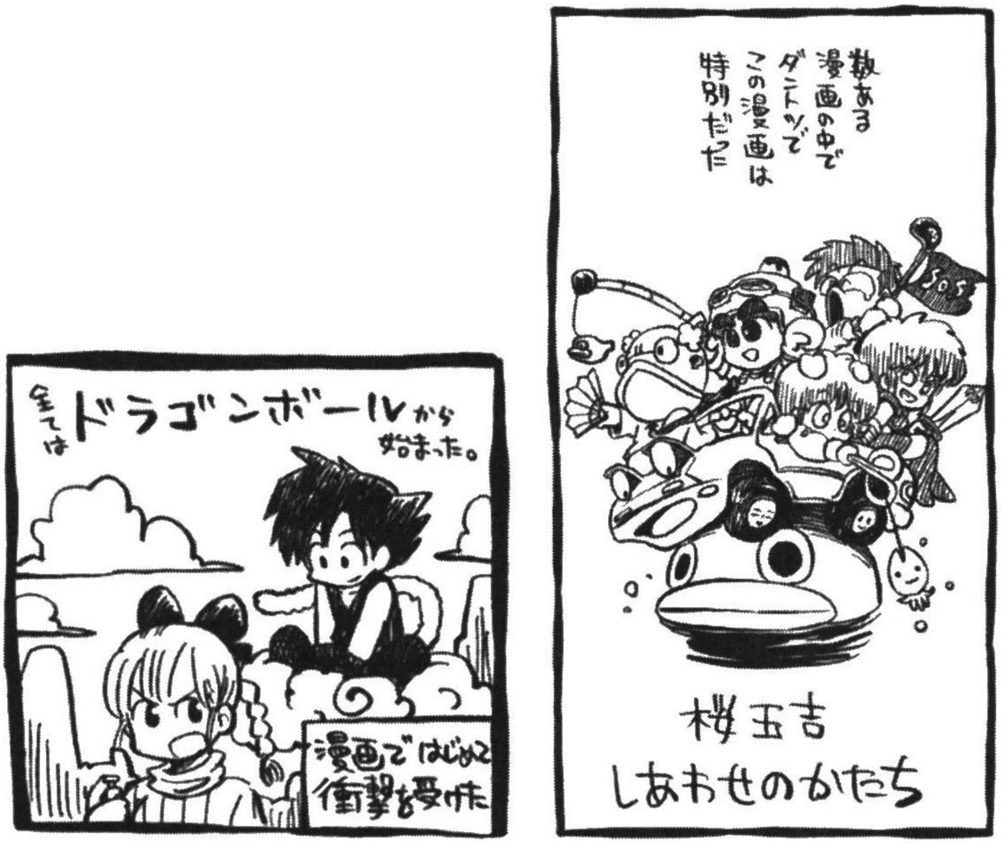
Afterward, the "feeling similar to 'moe'" was directed toward anime series being broadcast on television. In 1989, Arawi was absorbed in the anime series *Mashin Hero Wataru* (魔神英雄伝ワタル) and *Ranma ½*. In addition to their pop styles, he felt a certain emotion toward the heroines that "might have been moe."

> ***I was a latchkey kid, so when I came home from school, the room would be empty.***
> ***There were reruns of Devilman and Humanoid Monster Bem.***
> ***With so many eerie shows, a comical and happy one began.***
> ***Mashin Hero Wataru.***
> ***This anime that blew away the loneliness of my solitary evenings***
> ***became an oasis for my heart.***
> ***At any rate, Himiko was so cute.***
> ***The indescribable feeling I had for Himiko back then,***
> ***thinking about it now, might have been moe.***
> [From "Anime Story #1" (アニメ話①), *Monthly Newtype*, June 2018 issue]

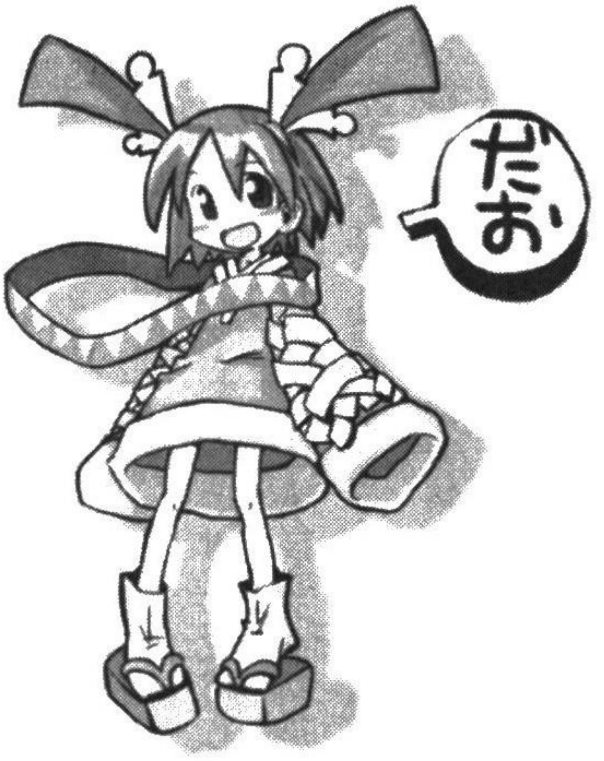
> ***After Mashin Eiyūden Wataru opened the door to anime for me, the next thing I encountered was Ranma ½.***
> ***The moment I saw the opening, I was knocked out by the deformed style and balance, which I had never seen before.***
> ***I frantically tried to copy it, but it just wouldn't look right!!!***
> ***Realizing that I couldn't draw girls, the strange thing I started to do***
> ***was draw nothing but the corpses of Namekians.***
> ***I think I wanted to find my own special skill that no one else was doing.***
> [From "Anime Story #2" (アニメ話②), Monthly Newtype, July 2018 issue]

What's interesting is that he tried to copy the girls in *Ranma ½* but gave up in frustration. While Arawi was gifted at art—winning awards in drawing contests and doing cover art for school literary magazines [19]—he also experienced a setback, realizing that he "couldn't draw girls." This experience meant that he had not yet found his ideal form of cuteness. In contrast to his ability to draw deformed art styles and detailed backgrounds, the method of expressing a cute girl was still beyond the grasp of elementary school Arawi.

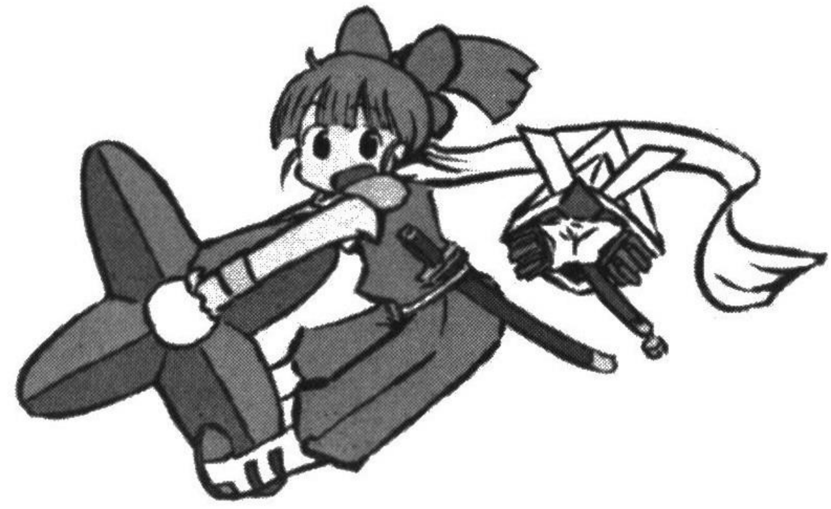
However, the inability to see his ideal form meant that there was plenty of room for growth. Arawi would continue to absorb works with characters that evoked "moe-like" feelings, accumulating knowledge about cuteness. Then, over a decade later, when he began to seriously aim to become a manga artist, his talent would finally blossom.


数ある漫画の中でダントツでこの漫画は特別だった
桜玉吉
しあわせのかたち
全てはドラゴンボールから始まった。
漫画ではじめて衝撃を受けた

Left: From Helvetica Standard note, "Hiding That I Like 'Cute': Part 2" (「かわいい」が好きをひた隠さねば: 後編), posted on June 18, 2021: Son Goku and Bulma from *Dragon Ball*.
Right: From Helvetica Standard note, "Manga Michi 05: The Abyss of Submission # 1," posted on July 13, 2021: The main characters from *Shiawase no Katachi*.



From Himarayairuka, circa the first half of 2003: "2-Sei Veruno" (2世ヴェルノ, "2nd Gen Veruno"). An illustration influenced by the character Veruno from *Shiawase no Katachi*.



From a Twitter post on April 25, 2015: "Shinobibe" (しのびべ). An illustration of Himiko Shinobibe from *Mashin Hero Wataru*.

A World Full of Fun

Arawi's creative roots lie in his preference for pop and cheerful works, as well as his enjoyment of solitary moments. The former originated from his memories of nighttime, when he was afraid of the dark and death, while the latter stemmed from his memories of being alone with the sound of rain.

He also developed the values of wanting to entertain others with his manga and create unique works of his own during his elementary school years. This came from his family gatherings, where he shared his drawings with relatives and was inspired by the exceptional talent of a few of them.

These experiences were a result of growing up in his hometown of Tomita-machi. The lack of streetlights made the nights dark, and the close-knit family ties were characteristic of a typical rural village. Being in a small town in Gunma Prefecture undoubtedly had a major influence on the direction of his identity.

In an essay, Arawi muses on a counterfactual scenario, wondering what he would have been like if he had lived in Nishi-Kawaguchi, Saitama, or Tokyo from the start, instead of moving there after high school graduation. He hints that the fear of games he played with his friend "Falcon" in elementary school, which was amplified by the dark walk home, was something he could never have experienced in the city.

> ***Thinking about it now, maybe the feeling of "fear" would have been a little weaker if the walk home from Falcon's house had been during the daytime. If that place wasn't Gunma but a brighter place like Nishi-Kawaguchi or Tokyo, maybe the feeling of "fear" would have been different. I often think about things like that.*** [From Helvetica Standard note, "Fragments of Daily Life 5: Scary Pictures Even in the Daytime," February 17, 2022]

On the other hand, his fondness for illustration styles was largely unrelated to the place where he grew up. With the exception of Gunma-chan, he would have had the opportunity to encounter deformed art styles and the lines of cute boys and girls even if he had lived in the city.

To understand Arawi's artistic tastes, we need to look at the era he grew up in, not the place. Spending his elementary school years in the atmosphere of the 1980s was the foundation that solidified his art style and, by extension, the worldview of his works.

In the 1980s, supported by stable economic growth and the diversification of consumer needs, a brilliant pop culture flourished, especially in the urban centers of Tokyo. Through mass media, urban trends also began to spread to rural areas.

Because of this, Arawi, despite living in the countryside, became absorbed in children's entertainment that originated in the city. Specifically, he was exposed to many products through the advertisement and tie-in pages of manga magazines like *CoroCoro Comic*, *Comic BomBom*, and *Shonen Jump*.

Since much of this children's merchandise used a pop and cheerful style with deformed illustrations, he said he was captivated by the sheer number of appealing products.

> ***When I was a kid, I was absorbed in reading manga magazines. Every issue, they would feature character goods or Famicom games, and I learned that there was a lot of interesting culture in this world. There was so much fun that I didn't know what to choose.*** [From an interview for this book]

There were things like the *Bikkuriman Devil VS Angel Stickers* collection, *SD Gundam* (which featured the mechs of *Mobile Suit Gundam* as short, deformed characters), "Kinkeshi" (a series of eraser figures of *Kinnikuman* characters. It is known as *M.U.S.C.L.E.* in United States), and the confectionery toy series *Necros Fortress* [20].

Arawi was surrounded by a volume of entertainment that a single person could never hope to consume. Because of this, he came to feel that "there was so much fun that I didn't know what to choose." Growing up in the 1980s, an era rich with children's entertainment, he was able to develop the happy conviction that the world held more interesting things than he could ever hold in his hands.

As a reflection of the author's tastes, the entertainment he enjoyed as a child is often drawn into the backgrounds of his manga, such as *Nichijou* and *CITY* [21].

Later, when asked about the works that influenced him, Arawi gave the following response:

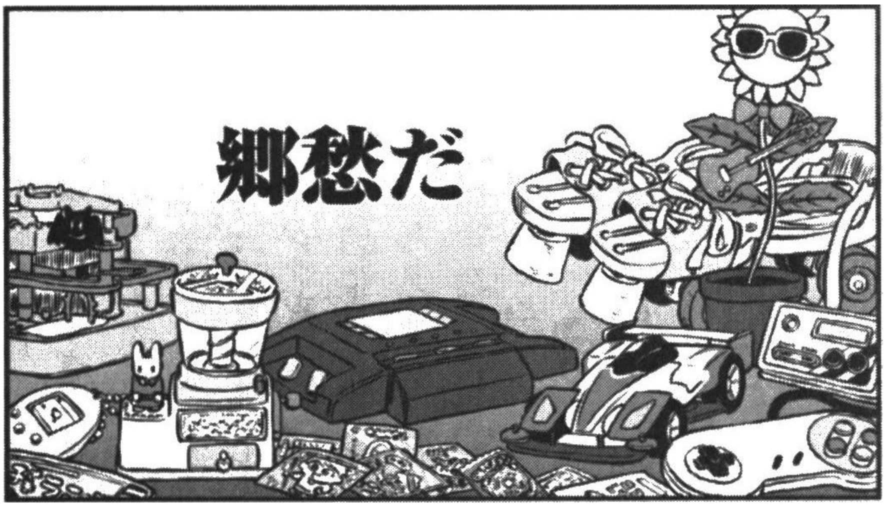
> ***Everything I've seen has influenced me. The main character is the one you thought of first.*** [From a Twitter post on November 4, 2011]

From the moment he gained awareness, he has been creating things that are influenced by everything he has seen. The correctness of this self-analysis has already been discussed in this chapter.

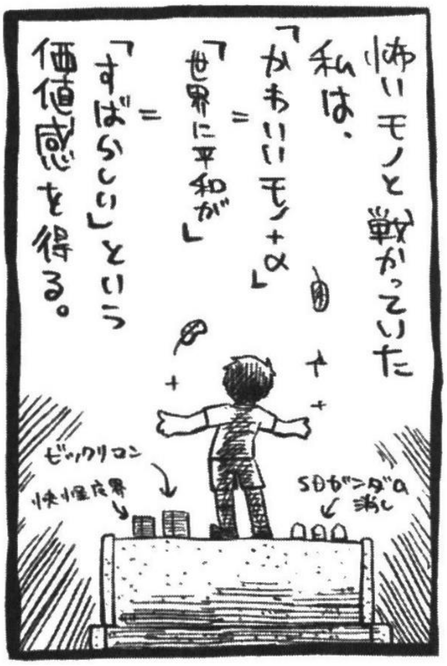
And during his elementary school years, the thing he "saw" most often was children's pop culture. This meant that the value of "so much fun that I don't know what to choose" was repeatedly imprinted on him. Reading his works after Nichijou, you can see how this joyful feeling is still very much alive in them today.

Furthermore, the idea that there are countless interesting things in the world is what led to his current creative approach of making things that he "somehow likes." For Arawi, creating a work is nothing less than a quest to find things he "somehow likes"—that is, the things he uniquely likes.

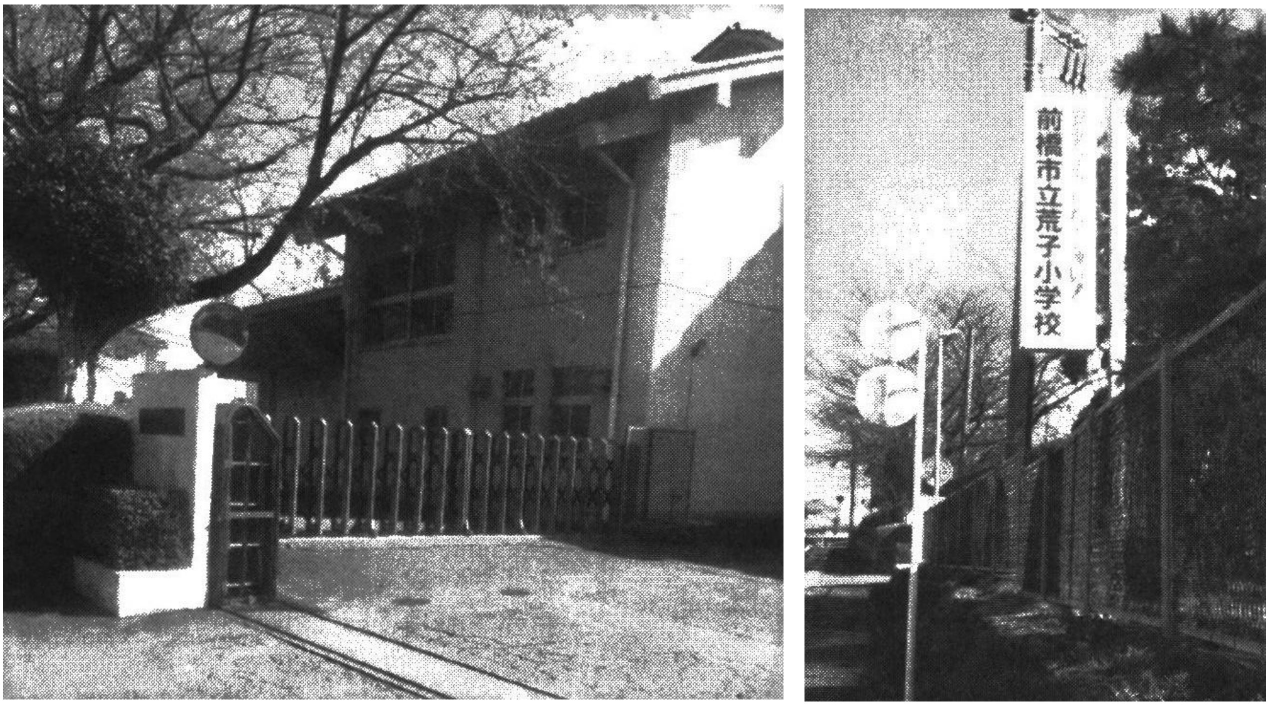
The core of Arawi's creative drive seems to be rooted in a consciousness he developed as a child: in a world with so much fun, he wants to seek out something that is special and truly his own.



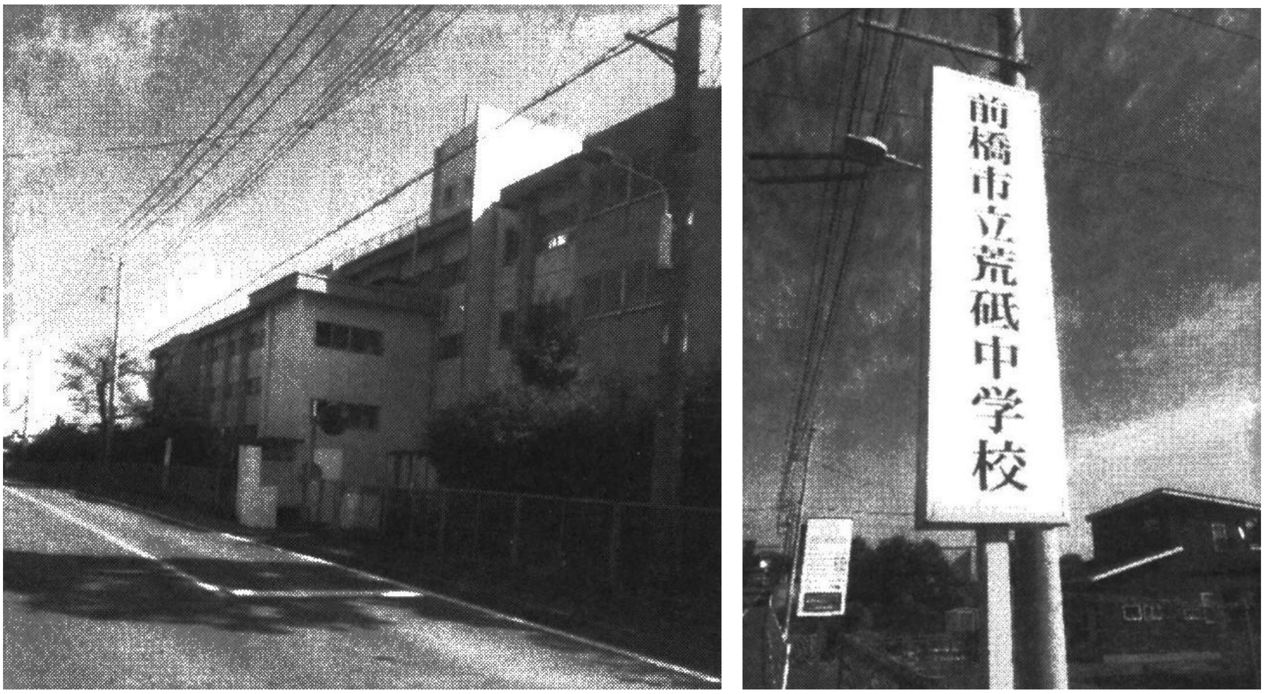
From *CITY*, Volume 13, page 114: A depiction of toys and cheap sweets that were popular mainly during the 1980s and 1990s.


怖いモノと戦かっていた
私は、
「かわいいモノ+α」
=
「世界に平和が」
=
「すばらしい」という
価値感を得る。
ビックリマン
快怪広界
SDガンダムの消し

From Helvetica Standard note, "Hiding That I Like 'Cute': Part 2," posted on June 18, 2021.



Maebashi City Arako Elementary School, Arawi's alma mater. Photographed in October 2019.



Maebashi City Arato Junior High School, Arawi's alma mater. Photographed in October 2019.

---

[1]. Barubora began evaluating Arawi's work early on, contributing reviews soon after the first volume of *Nichijou* was released (e.g., "WAM BOOK My 3 Favorite Reads" (WAM BOOK 私のハマった3冊) in *Weekly ASCII* on September 25, 2007; "Moe × Absurd Gag × Drifters × ASCII Culture " (萌え×不条理ギャグ×ドリフ×アスキー文化) in *Quick Japan* Volume 75). The two later began collaborating: in 2010, Arawi provided the artwork for Barubora's blog "E-Nikki" (January 26 article), and they co-hosted the DOMMUNE live streaming broadcast "Arawi Keiichi Hour: Arawi VS Barubora" (あらゐけいいちアワー　あらゐVSばるぼら) (July 26 broadcast). Their connection is also seen in *Nichijou* Volume 4, page 71 ("Nichijou no 62"), where Barubora's book *Nylon 100 Percent: The Origin of 80s Shibuya Pop Culture* (ナイロン100パーセント　80年代渋谷発ポップカルチャーの源流) is depicted.

[2]. Arawi's hometown is revealed to be Tomita-machi in his essay "Mother" from the collection *Pollyanna*.

[3]. In the Helvetica Standard note post "Fragments of Daily Life 1: sailormoonredraw " (日々の断片1 sailormoonredraw, February 11, 2022), Arawi reflects that the atmosphere of the anime *Pretty Soldier Sailor Moon* (1992-1997) and *Super Mario Bros.* felt frightening. *"I remember watching Sailor Moon on TV maybe two or three times. [...] While vaguely watching it, I felt like it was quite high on the horror scale, a scary story, which led me to stop watching. I really can't stand things that are scary. Separately, the castle where Bowser is in the original Super Mario is terrifying. That's pure Gothic horror."*

[4]. In an interview for this book, Arawi cited the American singer Aretha Franklin's song "Think" (1968) as one of the image songs for *Nichijou*. His use of Aretha's name in his blog title was likely a reference to this song when he was about to start the *Nichijou* serialization. Incidentally, "Think" was also featured in the 1980 film *The Blues Brothers*. Since the game *Mother* pays homage to *The Blues Brothers*, Arawi may have learned of the film that way. Arawi has also cited other image songs for *Nichijou*. (See the notes for "So Many Things I Want to Do #1" Note 15 and "So Many Things I Want to Do #2" Note 16 for details.)

[5]. See "Gona B" on Himarayairuka, October 4, 2002. For details on Arawi's practice work "Gona B," refer to the section "The Eve of Comitia" in this book.

[6]. In the essay manga "Initial Impulse" (初期衝動) published in *Monthly Newtype* (September 2019 issue), Arawi reflects: "I've liked drawing since I was in elementary school. Although it was just scribbling in my notebook, it was nothing more than 'scribbling.' The reason I liked it was because 'people praised me' and 'I wasn't compared to others.' If it weren't for that, I think I would have quit drawing long ago."

[7]. See the interview published in *Tia's Magazine 89*.

[8]. The announcement page for the "Arawi-darake no Keiichi Matsuri" in the September 2007 issue of Shōnen Ace included a list of the original pin badge designs drawn by Arawi. The Sekiguchi-kun pin badge was among them. This list was also reprinted in the commercial tankōbon edition of *Helvetica Standard*.

[9]. An episode from the second assistant, Ogi-kun's, time working with Arawi is recounted in the essay "Writing and Illustrations [Ogi]" included in *Helvetica Standard Italic*.

[10]. Arawi has given different explanations for the origin of the title "My Ordinary Life" in various interviews. In "Keiichi Arawi: Off-the-Charts, Otherworldly Creativity!," he stated, "The title *Nichijou* is an antithesis to the slice-of-life manga established by *Azumanga Daioh*. That might sound cool [laughs], but the honest truth is that I wanted a title that could absorb all the nuances I found interesting. Something like, 'You can do anything.'" Conversely, in "Hon Yomiuri-do Comic-kan: 'Nichijō-kei Manga's Popularity,'" he said, "I like Showa-era pure literature, so I wanted to make the title as concise as possible." These statements suggest that the inspiration for the title Nichijou is not singular but multifaceted.

[11]. The current Gunma-chan yuru-chara (mascot) responsible for Gunma Prefecture's promotional activities, as of 2023, is commonly referred to as the Second Generation Gunma-chan and is a different character from the one designed by Noboru Baba.

[12]. See the kumomadori blog, "Yokkun" (よっくん), posted on October 29, 2008. ("My friend Yokkun praised my Q-Taro drawing that I casually drew on the back of a test, and I was so happy. Yokkun was probably the first person to ever praise my drawing.") "Yokkun" was also reprinted in the commercial tankōbon edition of *Helvetica Standard*.

[13]. See the "Fujiko Fujio A Autograph Session & Talk Show" held on December 8, 2012.

[14]. The friend mentioned here, Falcon, also appears in the end-of-volume essay "Soccer" in *Futari Soccer*. ("This is a story from when I was in the 5th grade. [...] As the days passed, my desire to play Super Mario became intense, and I searched for someone who owned it. I heard that Falcon from the next class had it. It's unclear why his nickname was Falcon. I'll have to ask him at a class reunion sometime.")

[15]. The essay "Fragments of Daily Life 5: Scary Pictures Even in the Daytime" provides details about the scary game software played at Falcon's house. *("During my elementary and junior high school days, I often went to Falcon's house to play. [...] The game Falcon was playing there was Famicom Detective Club. People were being killed on the screen one after another, and the music was very scary. The fact that the back of Falcon's house was a graveyard only amplified the fear. Of course, it was a single-player game, so I just watched from behind. Gradually, the outside world turned to twilight, and the time dominated by the unique blackness of Gunma approached. In the end, I had to go home right then. In the darkness of the bicycle ride home, the murder cases of Famicom Detective Club and reality mixed together. Anxiety and darkness became one, dominating my mind.")*

[16]. See the essay manga "Hiding That I Like 'Cute': Part 1" (「かわいい」が好きをひた隠さねば：前編) posted on Helvetica Standard note on June 17, 2022. In this article, he mentions also liking *Goziland*, a deformed, child-friendly character version of *Godzilla*, and merchandise that rendered the characters from Yudetamago's manga *Kinnikuman* in a short, two-head-tall style.

[17]. The picture book *Daruma-chan to Tengu-chan* (だるまちゃんとてんぐちゃん, "Little Daruma and Little Tengu") by Satoshi Kako is mentioned on the inside back cover of *Nichijou* Volume 5.

[18]. In the second chapter of *Helvetica Standard*, Arawi reveals that he was playing "Dragon Quest III for the sixth time."

[19]. See Helvetica Standard note, "Manga Michi 01: Childhood Frustration # 1," posted on July 1, 2022.

[20]. In *Quick Japan* Volume 81, Arawi recounts collecting "Kinkeshi" fervently in his childhood.

[21]. On page 114 of *CITY* Volume 13, the following toys and snacks are depicted, listed here in order from oldest to newest: the cigarette-shaped candy "Cocoa Cigarette" (ココアシガレット, 1951), the 3D maze board game "Obake-jō Dasshutsu Game" (おばけ城脱出ゲーム, "Ghost Castle Escape Game," 1984), the 5-yen coin-shaped chocolate "Go'en ga Aru Yo" (ごえんがあるよ, 1984), the stopwatch/watch "Shuwatch" (シュウォッチ, 1987), roller skates (which became popular after the male idol group Hikaru Genji used them, 1987), the 4WD model car "Mini 4WD" (media mix development began in 1987), the sound-activated sunflower doll "Flower Rock" (1988), the collection sticker series "Kaikai Makai: Omake Seal" (快怪魔界 おまけシール, "Kaikai Makai Bonus Sticker," 1988), "Beads Magic" (late 1980s), which allowed users to make accessories with the Sanrio character Marron Cream, the cheap snack "Okashina Bentou: Okosama Lunch" (おかしな弁当 お子さまランチ, "Funny Lunch Box: Children's Lunch," early 1990s), the Super Famicom controller (1990), the barcode-reading game console "Barcode Battler" (バーコードバトラー, 1991), and the keychain game "Tamagotchi" (1996).

Primary Experiences #2: Junior High School Years (1990–1993)

Starting to Chase His Own "Somehow Likes"

In the previous chapter, we analyzed Arawi's elementary school years, covering the events and works that influenced him. His pursuit of cheerful, pop-style works, his fondness for simple yet cute deformed art, and his desire to create unique works different from others are all traits that continue to this day. Arawi's creative output was thus shaped by his experiences from infancy to boyhood.

So, what works influenced him after he entered junior high school? The best way to approach this is to start with the game he was obsessed with during his last summer of elementary school and its creator.

As introduced in the prologue, in 1989, sixth-grader Arawi was engrossed in the game *Mother*. He said it was the first RPG he had ever managed to complete after receiving his Famicom [1]. Because of this, his joy was all the greater, and it left an even deeper impression on him, as he recalls:

> ***It was the first RPG I ever cleared.***
> ***I think I was in 5th or 6th grade?***
> ***The commercial on TV was quite impactful, and I remember buying it thinking, "I have to play this."***
> ***I bought various FC (Famicom) software back then, but I never managed to clear them all, so I think this game became one I was especially attached to.***
> [From Himarayairuka, January 16, 2004]

The following year, in 1990, Arawi entered junior high school and gained a new perspective on *Mother* through a TV show he happened to be watching.

At the time, the variety program *Gimme a Break* (ギミア・ぶれいく), broadcast on the TBS network, featured copywriter Shigesato Itoi. Starting in June of that year, Itoi embarked on an excavation project for a segment of the show to verify the legend that the Edo Shogunate had buried treasure just before the return of political power to the Emperor.

Watching Itoi progress his investigation, focusing on Mount Akagi in Gunma Prefecture, Arawi's expectations swelled that a major discovery might be made nearby. Furthermore, he developed an intense curiosity upon learning that Itoi was not only a game designer for *Mother* but also a native of Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture, just like him.

> ***As I grew to like this game, I became interested in the person "Shigesato Itoi."***
> ***I remember borrowing every single book credited to "Shigesato Itoi" from the library.***
> ***That's when I found out he was from Gunma, and I remember loving this game (Mother) even more.*** [From an interview for this book]

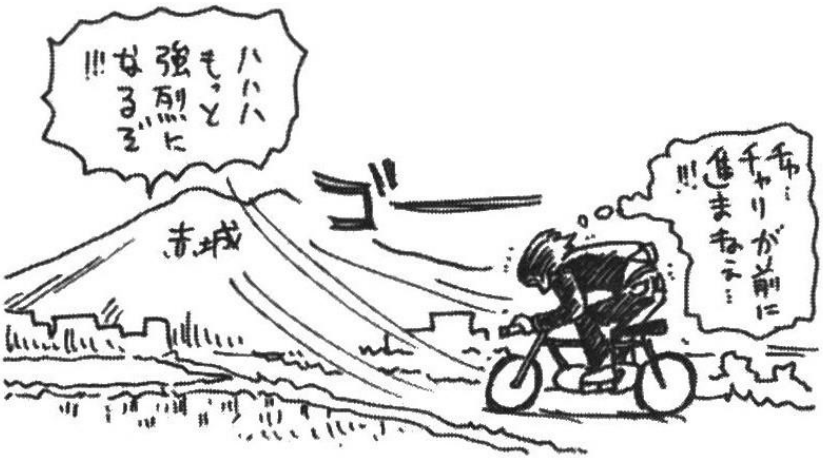
Mother was Arawi's favorite game. Normally, the impression of this game would have faded with time. This didn't happen because he learned that the game's creator, from his same hometown, was pursuing a buried treasure legend not far from his own house. Knowing about this unseen local connection cemented *Mother*'s status as a truly special work for him.

By becoming conscious of the game's creator, his attitude toward consuming entertainment changed. Unlike before, when he passively received entertainment information from magazines and TV, he actively began searching for Itoi's writings.

As a junior high school student, Arawi was not fond of reading text-heavy books [2]. However, his interest in Itoi overcame this aversion, and he frequently visited the school library. He soon encountered the collected volume of Itoi's column, *Manryū Copy-juku* (萬流コピー塾, "The All-Purpose Copywriting School"), which ran in the magazine Shūkan Bunshun, and was shocked. The writing contained sentences that seemed to verbalize the very things he loved inside himself.

> ***The year after I encountered Mother, there was a TV segment where Shigesato Itoi went searching for the Tokugawa buried treasure. After that, I read Manryū Copy-juku and was shocked. I remember being excited because "the things I liked inside me were being put into words."*** [From an interview for this book]

From *Mother* to *Manryū Copy-juku*. Using his interest in Itoi as his guide, Arawi developed the self-reliant attitude of seeking out the things he loved but hadn't yet known about. This shift—from merely immersing himself in popular entertainment (things everyone liked) to actively searching for his own unique "somehow likes"—became a crucial factor in making his later published works so distinct.


ハハハ もっと 強烈に なるぞ!!
赤城
ゴー
チャ… チャリが前に 進まねえ… !!

From *Nichijou* Volume X, page 89: An illustration recalling the memory of the Akagi-oroshi, the strong down-slope winds that blow from Mount Akagi in central Gunma Prefecture. Additionally, in the *Nichijou* chapter "Flying New York: Strong wind," published in *Monthly Shōnen Ace* (April 2013), Arawi drew the "Tokisadame-oroshi" in imitation of the Akagi-oroshi. Arawi reflected on this episode, saying, "Every time I reread it, I remember the 'Akagi-oroshi' of Gunma and indulge in my student-era memories."

"This Idle Chat Just Got Serious"

Manryū Copy-juku was formatted with Itoi selecting and reviewing excellent catchphrases submitted by readers. The work's charm, however, lay in Itoi's witty and lighthearted narrative style. His sharp, humorous commentary on the submissions showcased the skill of an accomplished copywriter.

Another major feature of the book was the unique nature of the topics requested. Itoi deliberately chose subjects that typically wouldn't require a catchphrase and then encouraged readers to submit one anyway. For example, the first column solicited catchphrases to promote Motoharu Fujita, a professional baseball manager who was relatively obscure at the time (1983). The second focused on condoms, which, due to their nature, lacked public advertising. The third asked for clever slogans for chikuwa-bu (tube-shaped flour cake)—an ingredient in oden that is often overlooked.

The reason Arawi felt that his own "likes" were being put into words stemmed from Itoi's choice of themes. He was intensely moved by the attitude of "imparting value to the 'useless and meaningless,'" which was distinctly different from standard advertising copy.

> ***I was really drawn to Manryū Copy-juku because of its attempt to impart value to things that are "useless and meaningless."*** [From an interview for this book]

To deliberately attach a catchphrase to something that doesn't need one. To transform the world into a more profound place by adding words to things that no one is looking at. Itoi's stance of giving value to the useless and meaningless embodied the kind of interestingness Arawi envisioned.

In a similar vein, Arawi first fell in love with *Mother* because it was full of intricate details that made him feel "somehow liking." It was perhaps an inevitability, then, that he would be drawn to *Manryū Copy-juku*, which focused on the overlooked details of the world.

Around the same time he read *Manryū Copy-juku*, Arawi was also captivated by another TV program for its ability to impart value to the useless and meaningless: *The Humiliation of Canossa* (カノッサの屈辱), a late-night show on the Fuji TV network [3].

This program was a mock-educational variety show that introduced contemporary secular culture by equating it to world and Japanese history. For instance, the 33rd episode, "The Gaming Industrial Revolution" (ゲーム産業革命), focused on the children of the 1980s who were addicted to video games. Instead of a straightforward report, however, the show exaggeratedly framed them as laborers reminiscent of post-Industrial Revolution factory workers operating machinery for long hours.

The contrast between contemporary cultural history and the grave tone in which it was presented, the puns and parodies incorporating historical terms, and the unique sociological perspective backed by solid research made *The Humiliation of Canossa* highly popular. Arawi was fascinated by the show's technique of magnifying things that the world overlooked. Along with *Manryū Copy-juku*, he learned from this program the attitude of dedicating full effort to what appears to be meaningless.

Arawi later stated that the ideal of his creative work is to make readers think, "This idle chat just got serious." He believes that the true calling of an author is to confuse and entertain the reader by pouring effort into the depiction of details that seem useless or meaningless [4].

> ***"This idle chat just got serious." That's what's interesting, and that's the ideal.*** [From a Twitter post on March 10, 2010]

> ***I think, "Wow, there's so much packed into that 'useless' part." It's incredible.*** [From a Twitter post on April 11, 2012]

The gag manga that Arawi would go on to publish incorporates elements of nonsense. This is likely a result of his efforts to focus on the useless and meaningless and make the reader feel that "idle chat has become serious." Furthermore, his illustration work is characterized by meticulously drawn backgrounds and hidden details that are separate from the main storyline. These techniques are also intended to show that "there's so much packed into that 'useless' part."

> ***My effort will never betray me. I believe that the more you draw, the more the weight of the page and a certain obsession will seep out. And when it's finished, you get that feeling of, "I'm the one who drew this!"*** [From *Monthly MOE*, "Special Interview: That Person's Picture Books," February 2014 issue]

There is no doubt that the genesis of Arawi's gag manga lies in *Manryū Copy-juku* and *The Humiliation of Canossa*. If his tastes from elementary school provided the fundamental roots of his work's worldview, the creations that impressed him during his junior high school years spurred the creation of the delicate, intricate details within his art.

The Origins of Essay Manga and Absurdist Comedy

The works that taught Arawi the appeal of pouring his full effort into seemingly useless details weren't limited to *Manryū Copy-juku* and *The Humiliation of Canossa*. The manga he had been reading for some time, *Shiawase no Katachi*, also played a crucial role.

In its early serialization, *Shiawase no Katachi* focused primarily on game parodies. As an elementary school student, Arawi was captivated by the parody elements and the cuteness of the characters' deformed art style. However, as the series progressed, it took an unexpected turn. Game-related elements decreased, and essay manga—comically recounting the author Tamakichi Sakura's private life—began to dominate the narrative. The manga also became increasingly experimental, with the art style changing rapidly and in-story works beginning serialization without any context.

Arawi was greatly moved by the ambitious style of *Shiawase no Katachi*'s later period. The essay element, which elevated daily happenings into interesting manga, was fundamentally an attempt to impart value to what might otherwise be considered useless.

Most people spend their days uneventfully. Daily life, if no special event occurs, is quickly forgotten. While not everything is useless, many people feel a sense of lack. Yet, with his keen observation of his surroundings and free-spirited expression, Sakura vividly resurrected the daily life that most people overlooked.

In the early 1990s, when the style of *Shiawase no Katachi* changed, essay manga had not yet matured into an independent genre and was not common. This contributed to Arawi's feeling of freshness toward Sakura's work, making him fall in love with it all over again.

Arawi's later manga, *Helvetica Standard*, runs parallel between essay manga and absurdist gag manga. Including the occasional references to the Famicom, the entire work is an homage to *Shiawase no Katachi*. To Arawi, Sakura was an artist who could effortlessly achieve the expressions he found interesting, all while drawing adorable illustrations. It was out of this reverence that Arawi created a work that was profoundly influenced by him.

Another essential manga that captivated Arawi in junior high was *Utsurun Desu.* (伝染るんです。) by Yoshida Sensha. Arawi was likely drawn to Yoshida via his previous gag manga, *Hamari Michi* (はまり道), which featured original interpretations of game characters and was serialized in *Famitsū*.

Utsurun Desu. features a stream of psychotic characters far removed from common sense and ethics, throwing their surroundings into chaos. Alternatively, it presents surreal situations that are calmly accepted by the characters, creating absurdist comedy. Given its serialization in the youth manga magazine *Big Comic Spirits*, the characters' grotesque and bizarre nature was expressed in a somewhat provocative way. Compared to Arawi's previous tastes, this seemed like a different kind of work.

Yet, he was drawn to it because, in a way different from *Shiawase no Katachi*, it also highlighted the elements of the useless and meaningless. *Utsurun Desu.*'s bizarre characters and absurd settings maintained their own unique values, uncorrupted by societal norms. Furthermore, Yoshida Sensha never compromised his unique worldview, even if it meant failing to gain the understanding of his readers.

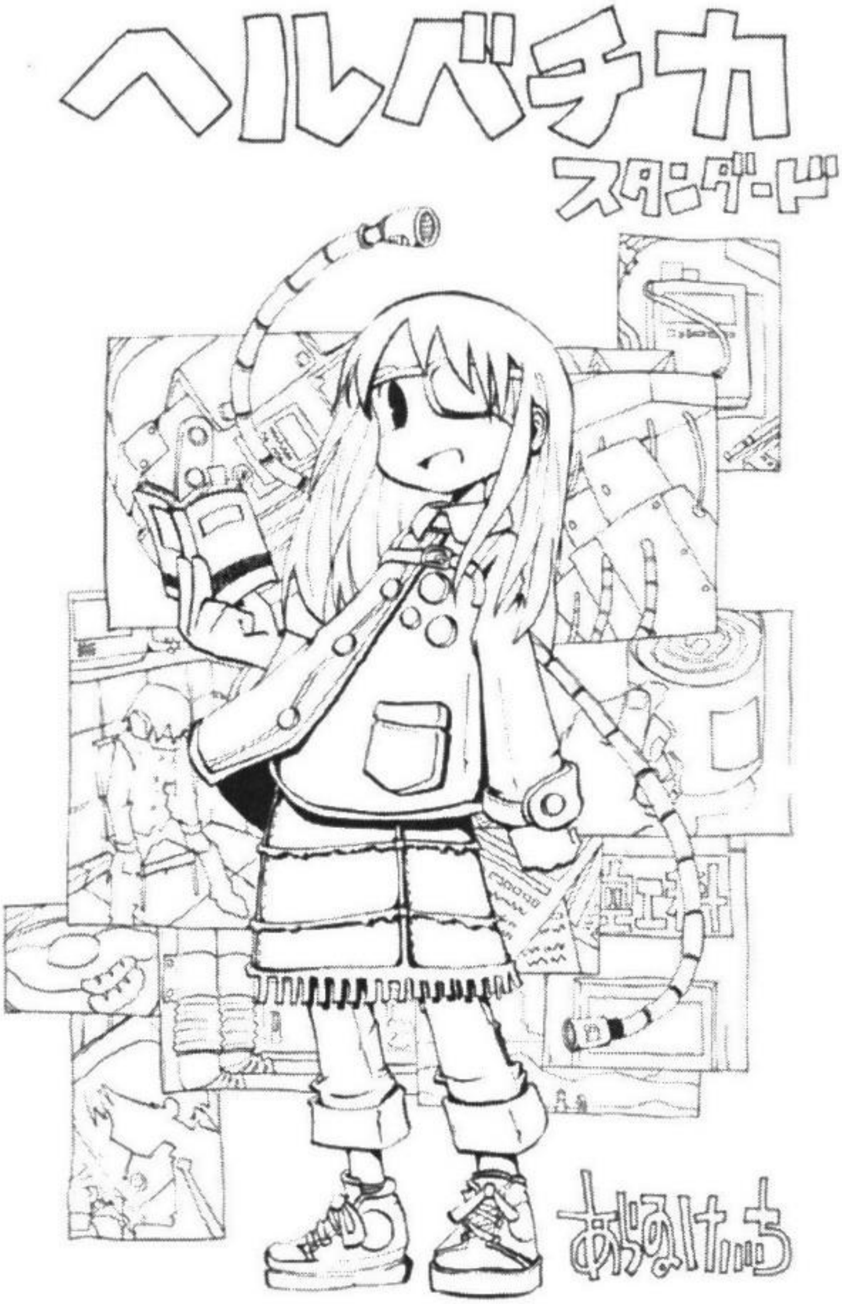
Ostensibly, *Utsurun Desu.* has no "theme." But Arawi likely received a powerful message: that interesting creative works can be made without pursuing the meaning or value sought by the general readership.

> ***If there is a source [for my own gag ideas], it's being able to follow up after a joke falls flat. If it falls flat but you continue, it becomes surreal, and if you continue even further, it turns into exhilaration. On the contrary, that's what's funny. It's tough if you feel like you have to do a gag; the key is how freely you can do something stupid.*** [From an interview in Tia’s Magazine 89]

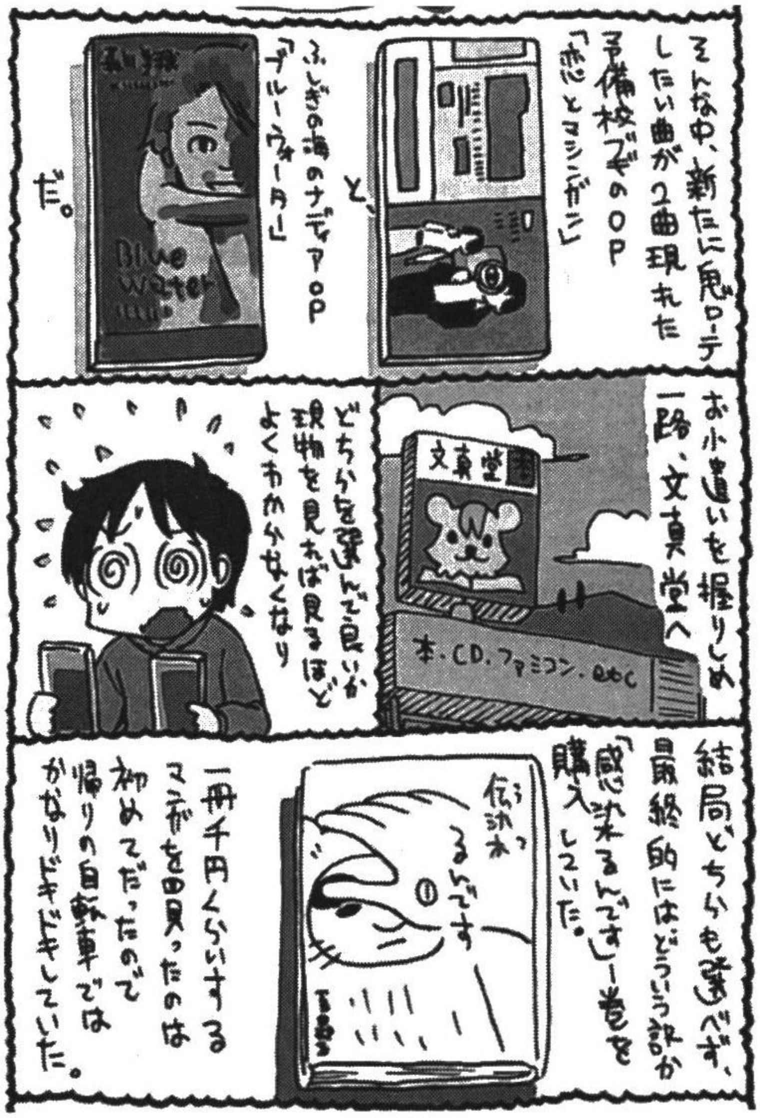
Arawi's later work, *Nichijou*, is set in a world half a step removed from reality and contains many absurdist elements. One could compare its setting to Yoshida Sensha's manga. However, the influence of *Utsurun Desu.* goes beyond setting; it instilled the belief to continue drawing stories that run contrary to common sense.

It's okay to express only the useless and meaningless. It's okay if the readers don't immediately understand. What's more important is to continue the expression. If you continue, it becomes surreal, and if you continue further, it turns into exhilaration. The ability to continue drawing *Nichijou* for over a decade was a gift from his reading experience in junior high.

It is noteworthy that Arawi's encounter with the two genres he would primarily pursue as a professional manga artist—essay manga (expressing events in his surroundings) and absurdist gag manga—happened simultaneously during this period.


ヘルベチカ
スタンダード
あらゐけいいち

Helvetica Standard cover illustration


そんな中、新たに鬼ローテしたい曲が2曲現れた
予備校ブギのOP「恋とマシンガン」
と、
ふしぎの海のナディアOP「ブルーウォーター」
だ。
Blue Water
お小遣いを握りしめ一路、文真堂へ
文真堂
本・CD・ファミコン・etc
どちらを選んで良いか現物を見れば見るほどよくわからなくなり
結局どちらも選べず、最終的にはどういう訳か「感染るんです」一巻を購入していた。
伝染るんです ①
一冊千円くらいするマンガを買ったのは初めてだったので帰りの自転車ではかなりドキドキしていた。

From " Music and Me #2" (私と音楽②) in *Monthly Newtype*, August 2016 issue. This essay manga recounts how Arawi acquired the first volume of *Utsurun Desu.* in October 1990. At the time, Arawi, then a first-year junior high school student, was debating whether to buy the single CD for either "Love and Machine Gun " (恋とマシンガン, the theme song for the TBS drama *Yobikou Boogie* airing that year) or "Blue Water" (ブルーウォーター, the theme song for the anime *Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water*). After much indecision, he says he made a third choice: purchasing *Utsurun Desu.* (伝染るんです。), which was somehow lined up on the new releases shelf.

Reader Submission Culture and "Stupidity"

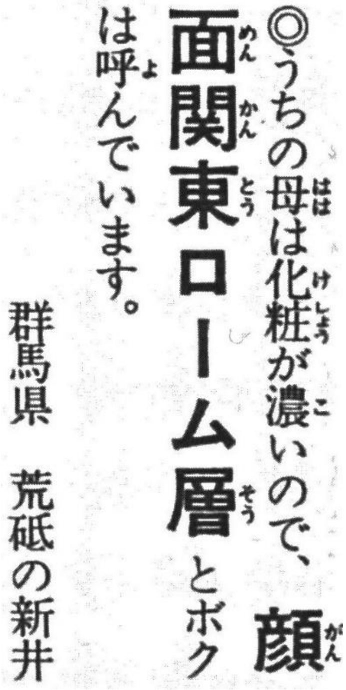
The early 1990s, when Arawi was in junior high, was a time of peak magazine culture, and the segment soliciting postcards from general readers was booming. Submission projects like "Jump Hōsōkyoku" (ジャンプ放送局, "Jump Broadcast Station") in *Shonen Jump* and "Famitsū Chōnaikai" (ファミ通町内会, "Famitsū Neighborhood Association") in *Famicom Tsūshin* were highly popular, publishing a large number of reader postcards.

It is easy to imagine that Arawi was caught up in the fervor of this vibrant reader submission culture. His creative urge to make something unique that only he could create was channeled into magazine submission projects during his junior high years. The fact that Itoi's *Manryū Copy-juku* was also a public submission project seeking catchphrases likely fueled his admiration for the culture.

Driven by the desire to be published in the same magazine as Tamakichi Sakura, Arawi set his sights on the "Famitsū Chōnaikai" and began writing postcards.

> ***Art, characters, small objects, tempo, ideas in the illustration, the author himself, etc...***
> ***I was captivated by everything in this manga (Shiawase no Katachi).***
> ***And I started to think: I want to be published in the same magazine as Tamakichi Sakura.***
> ***I decided to draw a gag and submit it to the reader page of Famitsū, even if it was a long shot.***
> [From Helvetica Standard note, "Manga Michi 05: The Abyss of Submission # 1," July 13, 2022]

His postcard submission activities soon bore fruit. A post was published in the "Watashi no Hōkokusho" (私の報告書, "My Report") corner of the "Famitsū Chōnaikai" section in the November 23, 1990 issue of *Famicom Tsushin*. Using the pen name "Arato no Arai" (荒砥の新井, "Arai of Arato")—a combination of his junior high school name and his family name—the submission contained the comical line: *"My mom wears a lot of makeup, so I call her **Face Kanto Loam.**"* (うちの母は化粧が濃いので、**顔面関東ローム層**とボクは呼んでいます。) This was Arawi's first work published widely to the world.



◎うちの母は化粧が濃いので、顔面関東ローム層とボクは呼んでいます。

群馬県　荒砥の新井

The actual sentence submitted by Arawi during his junior high school years.

Arawi soon shifted his postcard submissions from magazines to late-night radio shows [5]. Late-night radio culture was also thriving during this period and actively solicited postcards from listeners. He began submitting, following this trend.

Then, in 1992, during his third year of junior high, his postcard was accepted for *Kishitani Gorō no Tokyo Radio Club* (岸谷五朗の東京 RADIO CLUB, "Gorō Kishitani's Tokyo Radio Club"), broadcast on TBS Radio. The comical illustration attached to his request to appear on a quiz segment caught the attention of the personality, Gorō Kishitani [6]. Arawi made a live telephone appearance on the show and was able to speak with Kishitani [7].

Next, he submitted a proposal for an original segment under the name "Mr. Arai," which was also successfully adopted. As a result, a new segment named after him, "Mr. Arai no Zettai Yatta Koto Aru Series" (Mr. アライの絶対やった事あるシリーズ, "Mr. Arai's 'Things You've Definitely Done' Series," a.k.a 絶ある, "Zetsu-Aru"), was launched on the program. The segment received a large reaction, became a popular feature, and inspired many other listeners to submit their own original segment ideas [8].

> ***I wasn't a fan of Oh! Deka (Ijūin Hikari's Oh! Deka Night broadcast on the Nippon Cultural Broadcasting network); I was a Gorō Kishitani guy, on the rival show. TBS Radio's Kishitani Gorō no Tokyo Radio Club. In junior high, I was frustrated because talking with my friends***

> ***wasn't very interesting, so I tried submitting to the radio, and one of my postcards got on. Then I thought, "I'll create my own segment!" and when I submitted a proposal, it got accepted. It was called "Mr. Arai no Zettai Yatta Koto Aru Series," with jokes like crossing your hands when riding a bicycle... it was new back then! (laughs)*** [From *Studio Voice*, "Keiichi Arawi: Off-the-Charts, Otherworldly Creativity!," January 2008 issue]

The postcard submission activities became his first experience of having his creative work widely recognized. Arawi, who recalls that the joy was incomparable, spent the entirety of his last year of junior high dedicated to submitting to *Radio Club*.

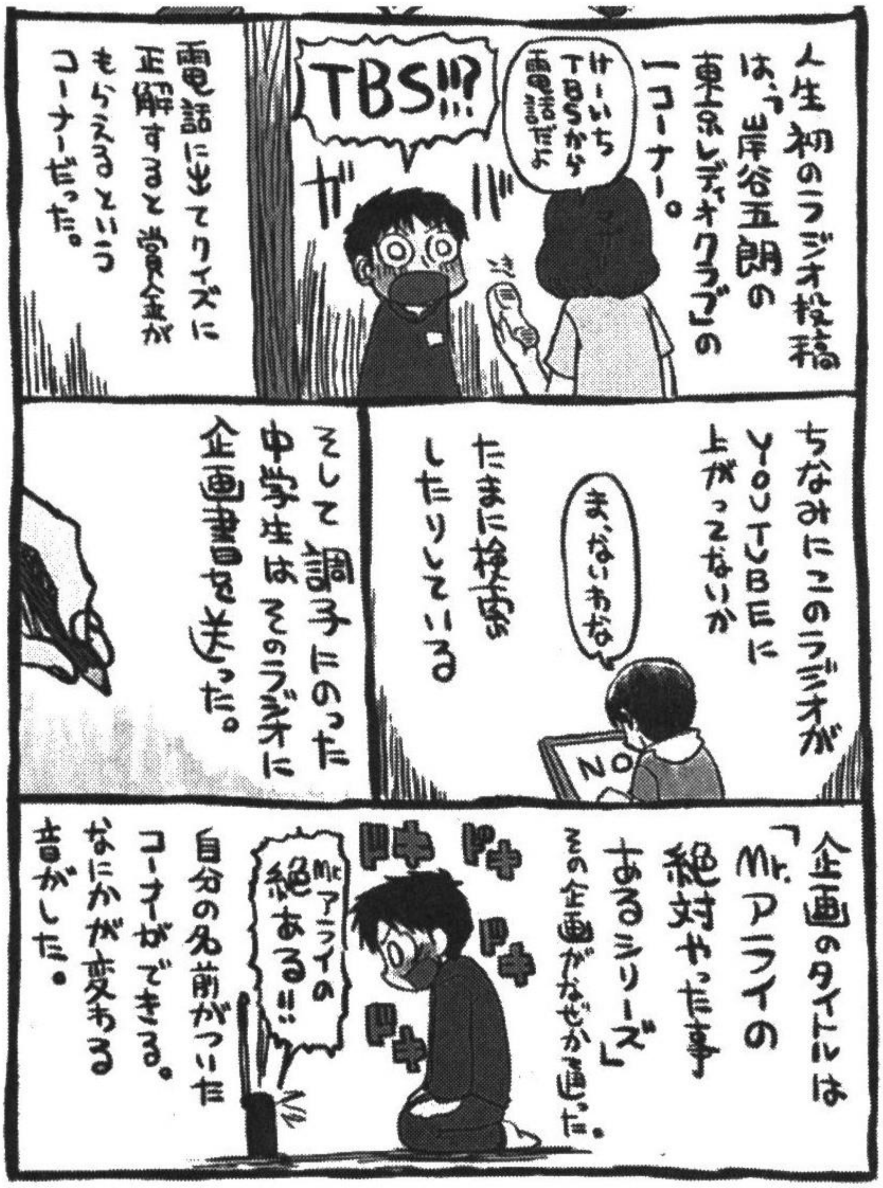
Neither the line "My mom wears a lot of makeup, so I call her Face Kanto Loam" nor the segment "Zetsu-Aru" holds any inherent value if taken seriously. However, their sheer stupidity simultaneously served as a powerful weapon to break down the psychological barrier of the reader/listener. Arawi learned from postcard submissions that "silliness" is extremely effective for entertaining others.

> ***I think "stupidity" is a key point in creation. What do you put inside this "stupidity"? The sillier, the better. For anything.*** [From an interview for this book]

The genre Arawi chose as a professional manga artist was gag comedy, designed to elicit laughter from readers. There is no doubt that the experience of postcard submission was the foundation for this style.

In magazine interviews, he has said that the spirit underlying his manga is the idea that "you should just do a lot of stupid things." It was with the spirit that the sillier, the better that *Nichijou*, a "never-before-seen silly manga" [9], was born.

> ***For me, the basic idea is just, "Let's do a lot of stupid things" (laughs). Something like, "Isn't this funny?" People often call it surreal, but for me, it feels slightly different. Didn't you draw manga in elementary school? The thing where you draw a manga and show it to people around you, saying, "How is this? Isn't this funny?" That's the root of Nichijou. I'm happiest when people laugh and dismiss it as stupid*** [From *Studio Voice*, "Keiichi Arawi: Off-the-Charts, Otherworldly Creativity!," January 2008 issue]


人生初のラジオ投稿は、「岸谷五朗の東京レディオクラブ」の一コーナー。
けーいちTBSから電話だよ
TBS!!?
ガ
電話に出てクイズに正解すると賞金がもらえるというコーナーだった。
ちなみにこのラジオがYOUTUBEに上がってないか
ま、ないわな
たまに検索したりしている
NO
そして調子にのった中学生はそのラジオに企画書を送った。
企画のタイトルは「Mr.アライの絶対やった事あるシリーズ」
その企画がなぜか通った。
ドキ
ドキ
ドキ
ドキ
Mr.アライの絶ある!!
自分の名前がついたコーナーができる。
なにかが変わる音がした。

From "Submission and Creation #1" (投稿と創作①) in *Monthly Newtype*, March 2019 issue. His memories of submitting to radio programs are also recounted in the essay manga "Manga Michi 05-08" published in Helvetica Standard note.

Obsession with Radio Broadcasts

When Arawi was in elementary school, he was obsessed with the anime *Mashin Eiyūden Wataru* and *Ranma ½*. Interestingly, these two works became the gateway to him stepping into the world of late-night radio.

Both Wataru and Ranma featured voice actress Megumi Hayashibara voicing major characters (Himiko Shinobibe and Ranma Saotome). Hayashibara, being a constant presence in both shows, became a figure of interest to Arawi.

He then moved from Hayashibara's program to another show on the same network, *Kishitani Gorō no Tokyo Radio Club*. It's fascinating that his anime hobby led to his discovery of Kishitani's show, which eventually led to his immersion in postcard submission [10].

In 1993, after Arawi entered high school, the frequency of his postcard submissions decreased. As detailed later, his attention shifted to other interests. He also doesn't appear to have become deeply involved in radio submission projects again [11].

However, he remains a heavy radio listener to this day. In fact, since he began aiming to become a manga artist, he has spent much more time listening to the radio, often having it on while he draws.

> ***I'm usually listening to AM radio when I'm doing the storyboards and when I'm drawing the manga. Maybe I want to pick up some ideas from it. I don't listen to FM much. I'm not a City (referring to Chuo FM, a station whose broadcast area includes Tokyo's Chuo, Chiyoda, Minato, and Kōtō Wards) person [laughs].*** [From "His Hand: No. 7 Keiichi Arawi" (彼の手 第7回 あらゐけいいち) in *Newtype Romance 2009 Winter*]

His deep involvement with radio is evident in many interviews. For example, during a guest appearance on Nippon Broadcasting System's *Yoshida Hisanori no Comi Para!* (吉田尚記のコミパラ！), he stated that he is aware of the full week's broadcast schedule across various stations.

> ***I listen pretty much from Monday to Sunday! If it's a 12-hour span, I know all the programs that are on this station, this program...*** [From *Kōdansha Presents Yoshida Hisanori no Comi Para!*, broadcast March 24, 2017]

The small feature "Tell Us! The Daily Life of Original Creator Keiichi Arawi" (教えて！原作・あらゐけいいちの日常), published during the airing of the *Nichijou* anime, also shows that he listens to the radio for most of his waking hours. The only concrete schedule information in the article is the mention of using Radiko (a service that allows listening to radio broadcasts over the internet). Conversely, this indicates that radio is such an integral part of his life that he listens to it constantly [12].

> ***09:00–12:00 Radiko (NACKS), thinking about various things, eating***
> ***12:00–18:00 Drawing, thinking about various things, eating***
> ***18:00-21:00 Doing something or other***
> ***21:00-00:00 Drawing, thinking about various things***
> ***00:00-03:00 Radiko (TBS), spacing out * (Basically listening to Radiko by zapping through stations)***
> ***03:00- Sleeping***
> [From " Tell Us! The Daily Life of Original Creator Keiichi Arawi " in *Monthly Newtype*, July 2011 issue]

His passion for radio can also be seen in his testimony that he repeatedly listens to recordings of funny episodes. For example, in a 2007 interview, he mentioned listening to episodes of the late-night radio shows *Kayō Junk: Bakushō Mondai Cowboy* (火曜 JUNK 爆笑問題カーボーイ) and *Cream Stew no All Night Nippon* (くりぃむしちゅーのオールナイトニッポン) dozens of times.

> ***I prefer listening to comedians talk on the radio over watching their bits on TV. I record them, and I've listened to the funny episodes dozens of times. I listen to Bakushō Mondai and Cream Stew's shows a lot; they're hilarious every time, so I learn a lot about their timing and delivery. The 2005 Bakushō Mondai episode with Ken'ichi Nagira as a guest (broadcast June 21, 2005) is the best because it's so random.*** [From Studio Voice, "Keiichi Arawi: Off-the-Charts, Otherworldly Creativity!," January 2008 issue]

Remarks about the radio also appear in a 2016 discussion article. Here, he confessed that it might be easier for him to "list 10 favorite radio episodes" than to "choose 10 favorite songs." After discussing his inclination toward Nippon Broadcasting System's *Miyake Yūji no Young Paradise* (三宅裕司のヤングパラダイス) and musician Eiichi Ohtaki's radio shows, he stated that he listens to his favorite episodes hundreds of times.

> ***Listing 10 episodes of radio would've been better! Like, "This episode of this radio show is the most stupid!" (laughs). Even a top 10 radio jingle list would be good (laughs). Since I was submitting since junior high, the radio must have a stronger pull on me. I replay my favorite episodes hundreds of times.*** [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]

From 2007, when he said, "I've listened to the funny episodes dozens of times," to 2016, when he said, "I replay my favorite episodes hundreds of times," the number of times he listened to his favorite shows swelled from dozens to hundreds over ten years.

It's also notable that his criteria for a funny radio show is based on "stupidity." The programs he rates as "the most stupid!" and "the best because it's so random" are the ones that directly informed his own gag manga, which is predicated on pursuing silliness.

Cannot Blend In, Wants to Create Something Interesting #1

In junior high school, Arawi learned the appeal of finding new value in the useless and meaningless, inspired by Itoi's writings.

Concurrently, his creative energies were focused on reader/listener submission projects for magazines and late-night radio shows. These submissions were successful, allowing Arawi to savor the joy of creation. Through the content of his accepted postcards, he realized that silliness was a potent weapon for entertaining others.

Beyond submissions, another all-consuming hobby was reading manga. He had been familiar with manga since elementary school, but in junior high, he plunged deeper, "devouring manga."

> ***In junior high, when I didn't have any particular friends, I went home and devoured manga. I was obsessed with the fun of manga; I'd use money for haircuts, lunch, or even money meant for reference books, and divert it all to buying manga. I remember asking my grandfather to help me expand the bookshelves to cover an entire wall in my room.***
>
> ***The manga I read during adolescence are special. With a powerful nostalgia filter, they are burned into my heart much more deeply and intensely than books I read as an adult. I realize now that the countless manga I read during this period have become my flesh and blood.***
> [From "Manga Michi to" (漫画道と, "With Manga Michi") in *Manga Michi*, Shogakukan Gamanga Books Edition, Volume 6]

In a different magazine interview, he stated, "I was reading comics that weren't the regular size; they were slightly larger comics, somewhat more adult-oriented manga" [13]. Since the previously mentioned *Shiawase no Katachi* and *Utsurun Desu.* were published in larger-format tankōbon (collected volumes) targeting adult readers, he was likely referring to these two works. Alternatively, he might have been thinking of the publishing imprints for these two books: *ASCII Comics* [14] or *Big Spirits Comics Special* [15]. Arawi reflected that the manga he read during adolescence was special and had become his "flesh and blood."

The passing comment in the interview that he "didn't have any particular friends" in junior high is significant, though it's lightly glossed over. Upon reflection, when discussing late-night radio, he also mentioned that he felt "depressed because talking with friends in junior high wasn't interesting."

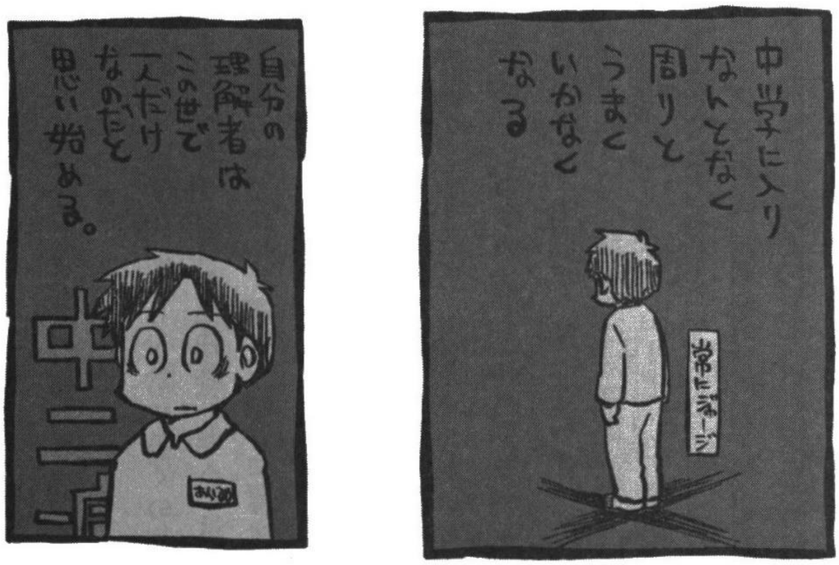
As these remarks suggest, Arawi, entering adolescence, felt discontented with his school environment. Though not explicitly mentioned until now, he struggled to navigate social distances with his classmates and spent his days unable to express himself effectively.

> ***When I entered junior high, I increasingly felt that "I couldn't relate to the people around me." For some reason, the things I found funny just weren't being conveyed properly. I don't know if it was due to the self-consciousness typical of adolescence, or if the people around me had changed. In any case, I spent every day feeling that "something was wrong."*** [From an interview for this book]

From a young age, Arawi was constantly influenced by many creative works. He cultivated core elements—like his fear of the dark, the solitude of rainy days, and the passion to create something different from others—that would later form the basis of his manga.

The final primary experience of his childhood and junior high years was the difficulty he had communicating effectively with others in his school life.

The fact that his thoughts and feelings somehow stopped being conveyed to others, and that the understanding friends he had in elementary school disappeared, leaving him in solitude, was a deeply serious problem for the adolescent boy. This experience would cast a deep shadow over the creative works he would go on to produce.


中学に入りなんとなく周りとうまくいかなくなる
常にぼーっ
自分の理解者はこの世で一人だけなのだと思い始める。
中二病
あらい

From Helvetica Standard note, "Manga Michi 05: The Abyss of Submission # 1," posted on July 13, 2021: Arawi, who had fallen into solitude in junior high school, realizes that he was the only person in the world who understood him.

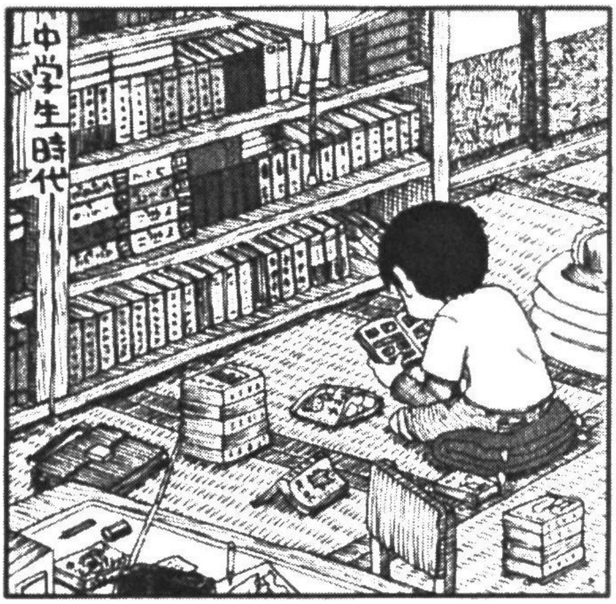


Illustration from "Manga Michi to" in Fujiko Fujio A's *Manga Michi*, Shogakukan Gamanga Books Edition, Volume 6. Arawi as a junior high school student reading a manga.

Cannot Blend In, Wants to Create Something Interesting #2

Let's delve a little deeper into Arawi's junior high school experience.

If Arawi had simply wanted to join the crowd, he could have just agreed with those around him. Whether it would have worked out or not, attempting to conform to the group was one way to resolve the issue. However, Arawi never considered entering the group by compromising his true self. The core of his struggle was always the frustration that "I couldn't convey the things I thought were interesting to others."

The anxiety that his thoughts weren't being communicated greatly fueled his creative drive. His urgent submission of postcards to magazine and late-night radio contests during his junior high years stemmed from a genuine desire for his ideas to be accepted.

The frustration he experienced at the onset of adolescence, combined with his powerful desire to express the things he found interesting, became the nucleus of his personality as a creator.

> ***In the midst of all that, I submitted postcards to magazines and the radio, and some were accepted, which gave me the confidence that I wasn't wrong. The awareness of not fitting into the group, combined with the desire to continue creating interesting things—those two elements are probably connected to my current work, so my junior high years were a special time for character formation.*** [From an interview for this book]

However, there was one time during his school life that offered a distraction from his loneliness: extracurricular club activities.

The Weightlifting Club Arawi belonged to was a collection of eccentrics. Spending time with members who were deeply immersed in their own hobbies and who didn't care about standing out from the crowd brought about a change in the lonely boy's state of mind.

> ***At the time, the Weightlifting Club was the only one in the prefecture, a strange club where you were guaranteed a prize if you competed in a tournament. The members who gathered in such a strange club were also a quirky bunch; they were absorbed in their individual hobbies without worrying about their surroundings.***
> ***They seemed to feel no loneliness being on their own. What I learned from them was, "If you have a hobby, nothing else really matters."*** [From an interview for this book]

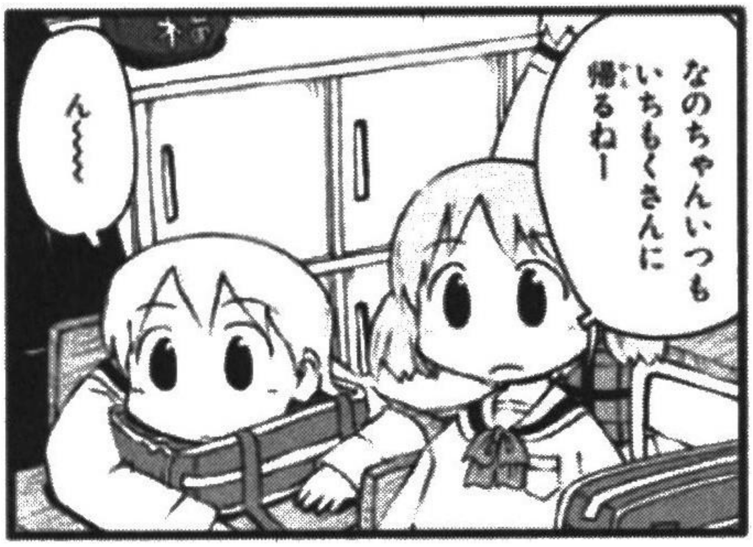
If you stick to what you love, it's okay if you're not recognized by the majority. There's no need to compromise your individuality to fit in with anyone else. If you have one important hobby, everything else is insignificant.

In his days in the Weightlifting Club, Arawi found a light. When he realized that his hobbies and creative work—manga, radio, and postcard submissions—were what truly mattered, his heart felt lighter, and his path forward seemed set.

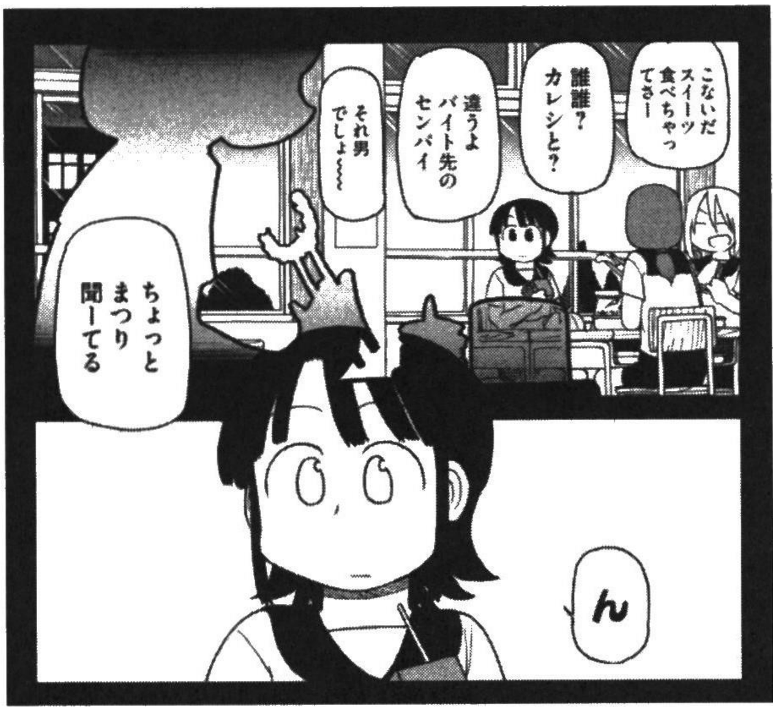
> ***Junior high was my darkest period. But at the same time, I have happy memories of starting to create things. The Weightlifting Club was genuinely full of oddballs. But for me at the time, they were the best people. People inevitably seek "normalcy," but when a bunch of "weird" people gather, you can feel okay about being weird, too.*** [From an interview for this book]

Whether consciously or not, Arawi, as a professional manga artist, frequently uses a structure that reflects his junior high school life. He repeatedly depicts a scenario in *Nichijou* and *CITY* where a character who cannot blend in is rescued by another unique individual.

The darkness and light surrounding human relationships that he experienced in junior high school have been indelibly imprinted on his creative works.


なのちゃんいつも
いちもくさんに
帰るねー
ん〜〜〜

From *Nichijou*, Volume 3, page 151: Nano Shinonome, a girl who kept her distance from her peers due to her identity as a robot, is reached out to by her classmate, Yuko Aioi.


こないだ
スイーツ
食べちゃって
さー
誰誰？
カレシと？
違うよ
バイト先の
センパイ
それ男
でしょ〜〜〜
ちょっと
まつり
聞ーてる
ん

From *CITY*, Volume 8, page 58: Matsuri Makabe approaches Eri Amakazari, a transfer student struggling to fit in at her new junior high school.

---

[1]. In the same article, Arawi explains that his inability to complete games other than Mother was due to their difficulty being too high for an elementary school student. The games he played at the time included *Obake no Q-Taro Wan Wan Panic* (オバケのQ太郎ワンワンパニック, 1985, In Unite States, it was released as *Chubby Cherub*), *Kanshaku-dama Nage Kantarō no Tōkaidō Gojūsan-tsugi* (かんしゃく玉なげカン太郎の東海道五十三次, "Firework Thrower Kantaro's 53 Stations of the Tōkaidō," 1986), *Challenger* (チャレンジャー, 1985), *Takeshi no Chōsenjō* (たけしの挑戦状, "Takeshi's Challenge," 1986), *Woody-Poko* (うっでいぽこ, 1986), and *Ganso Saiyūki: Super Monkey Daibōken* (元祖西遊記 スーパーモンキー大冒険, 1986).

[2]. See *Helvetica Standard Italic*, "Illustrations for covers of various print media: Shin'ichi Hoshi." Here, Arawi recalls his memory of being engrossed in Shin'ichi Hoshi's novels during his second year of junior high school, while also mentioning his past difficulty with reading text: "I was never good at reading books. I'd read the same line over and over, or get tired right away. I'd never read an entrie book from start to finish. Since I'm so bad at concentrating, I didn't think I'd ever be able to read a novel, but Shin'ichi Hoshi is the one who shattered that misconception for me."

[3]. See an interview for this book.

[4]. In 2020, Arawi gave the following evaluation of the work of American novelist Kurt Vonnegut in an interview with the overseas media outlet Fanbyte: "I liked the way Vonnegut took the important things in life and made them smaller, and how he would take an ordinary thing and make it bigger." (From "Nichijou, the Goofy Manga Classic, Drew Inspiration From a Tarantino Flop.") This quote, where he expresses a fondness for Vonnegut's style of "trivializing things everyone considers important and extremely exaggerating everyday occurrences," is thought to be an extension of the tastes he developed in junior high school. (Also see Note 3 in "Empty and Silent Creations 2" for more on Vonnegut.)

[5]. In an interview for this book, Arawi talked about postcard submissions: "I mainly submitted to Famitsū, and I remember being published in various corners. However, I never received a single 'Gabasu' (ガバス, the gift certificate sent by the editorial department when a postcard was recognized). I think I submitted elsewhere too, but my

memory is vague, partly because I couldn't properly confirm whether my postcards were published or not."

[6]. According to Helvetica Standard note, "Manga Michi 06–07: The Abyss of Submission, Parts 2–3" (July 14–21, 2022), Arawi drew an illustration on the accepted postcard that was "like a Namekian," with a green face and dead eyes. Elementary school Arawi, unable to draw the girls from *Ranma ½* well, drew pictures of dead Namekians instead; this experience was put to use in an unexpected way.

[7]. One of the characters in Arawi's later manga, *CITY*, named Gorō Kurobe, is a radio DJ. While the character's name is derived from Mount Kurobegoro, one of the 100 Famous Japanese Mountains, it is also likely a reference to Gorō Kishitani, the personality of *Radio Club*.

[8]. On June 20, 1993, a combined event, "Zetsu-Aru / Taitai Joint Event" (絶ある・たいたい合同イベント), was held at the outdoor stage of Inokashira Park, in conjunction with another listener-created segment called "Taitai" (たいたい). However, Arawi, who had already entered high school by this time, was unable to attend as it clashed with his Karate Club training camp.

[9]. See *Da Vinci*, December 2018 issue, "My Best Contribution by 12 Writers and Manga Artists: Keiichi Arawi" (作家・マンガ家 12 名によるマイ・ベスト寄稿！あらゐけいいち), featuring Gen Hoshino.

[10]. See "Anime Story #2" (アニメ話②) in *Monthly Newtype*, August 2018 issue. In this essay manga, the phrase "The friend of midnight is a true friend: Hiroyuki Itsuki's Night" (深夜の友は真の友　五木寛之の夜) is heard from the radio. This was the opening line of *Itsuki Hiroyuki no Yoru* (五木寛之の夜, "Hiroyuki Itsuki's Night") (1979–2004), which was also broadcast on the TBS Radio network.

[11]. Arawi's tweet from March 22, 2012, includes the comments: "I was read on the radio for the first time in a while," and "It just happened that I sent something and it was read. It's been about 10 years since I last sent anything." From this, it can be inferred that he had completely stopped submitting postcards to radio programs around 2002, which is when he seriously began aiming to become a manga artist.

[12]. In Helvetica Standard note, "Q&A #5" (質問応答 第 5 回) (June 23, 2022), Arawi responded that he has a "cycle, like listening to 'Radio' for half a year, and then 'Music' for half a year." Therefore, he is likely not strictly listening to the radio year-round, but rather in short, intense periods.

[13]. See *Chorus*, March 2009 issue, "Manga ni Rekishi Ari Dai 23-Kai: Arawi Keiichi."

[14]. The *Weekly Famitsū* April 18, 2004 special issue, which is depicted in the 4th chapter of *Helvetica Standard*, came with two commemorative appendixes for the 800th issue: a "Reprint Booklet of the First Issue of Famitsū" and a "Bēshikkun Tenugui" (hand towel). Kiyokazu Arai's *Bēshikkun* (べーしっ君) was a gag manga centered on a protagonist with a drawing style that parodied Ikki Kajiwara and Noboru Kawasaki's manga *Kyojin no Hoshi* (巨人の星, "Star of the Giants"), and Arawi is thought to have read it.

[15]. In the animated short "Amamiya-san at the Hour of the Ox" (丑三つ時の雨宮さん), which Arawi released on YouTube on March 9, 2021, a collected volume of Kiriko Kubo's gag manga *Imadoki no Kodomo* (いまどきのこども, "Children Nowadays"), which was serialized in *Weekly Big Comic Spirits*, is visible in the background (at 0:48 playback time). In the early 1990s, *Big Comic Spirits* featured a collection of highly accomplished gag manga; besides *Utsurun Desu.* and *Imadoki no Kodomo*, it also ran Koji Aikawa's *Kōji En* (コージ苑), Isami Nakagawa's *Kuma no Putarō* (クマのプー太郎, "Putarō the Bear"), and Takuya Nakazaki's *Jimihen* (じみへん), among others.

So Many Things I Want to Do #1: High School Years (1993–1996)

Starting Projects with Friends

In April 1993, Arawi entered Gunma Prefectural Isesaki Commercial High School. For a boy born and raised in Maebashi City, commuting outside the city was a new experience. But the location of the school wasn't the only thing that changed. His life began to transform completely from his junior high school days.

He immediately dedicated himself to the karate club. Unlike the weightlifting club, where he didn't have to practice seriously, the karate club's training was strict, and he recalls being physically and mentally forged in a sports-oriented environment.

> ***I spent my impressionable student years in Gunma. During my time at Arako Elementary, I had Jōmō Karuta imprinted on me; at Arato Junior High, I discovered the fun of late-night radio and manga; and at Isesaki Commercial High, I think I spent my days engrossed in hard karate training while silently wishing, "I want to quit this club as soon as possible."*** [From "Local Poster Illustration Gunma Prefecture," part of the "Kadokawa Group Comic Festival (Kado☆Comi) 2012 Summer" project (「角川グループコミック祭（角☆コミ）2012 夏」企画「ご当地ポスターイラスト 群馬県」)]

Arawi, unable to endure the strict training, wanted to quit as soon as possible. But the daily karate practice, for better or for worse, did not betray his efforts. Before he knew it, he had become strong enough to be selected as a reinforced athlete for the prefecture. Since his results made it even harder to quit, Arawi continued to train for all three years [1]. The training and the achievements that came with it were results he didn't particularly want.

But his experience in a sports club had a major impact on his personality. Thanks to the confidence he gained, he became significantly more outgoing compared to his "darkest period" in junior high.

Another major reason for his newfound confidence was making close friends in high school. With reliable friends, Arawi regained his naturally cheerful disposition.

It's noteworthy that he adopted an identity completely different from his junior high self. The experience of being in both environments—a school life where he couldn't effectively convey his feelings to others, and a high school life full of sweating in club activities and having fun with friends—deepened his inner self.

With friends by his side, Arawi, in contrast to his junior high self who stayed home writing postcards, began to hang out both inside and outside of school.

At the same time, his "desire to continue creating interesting things" remained. He started making short videos with his friends. With a video camera in hand, they had fun filming parodies of TV commercials and recording people's reactions when they dropped coins at a busy intersection in front of a train station.

Arawi and his friends running around the city trying to film something interesting evokes the image of characters from his manga. His pleasant memories from high school, not just his difficult junior high years, were clearly reflected in his works.

> ***Since I spent my adolescent high school years in Isesaki, the stage for Nichijou may have been heavily influenced by Gunma. We made a fictional instant yakisoba (fried noodles) commercial with my friends at the candy store in front of Isesaki Commercial High, dropped coins at the intersection in front of Isesaki Station to see people's reactions, and went on a treasure hunt for treasure that wasn't there at Kezōji Park on the way home from school. In that sense, the characters in my manga might be very close to my high school self. The fact that the characters' names are based on Gunma place names, and that Takasaki Daruma and Gunma folk toys appear in the manga, might be an unconscious expression of my love for my hometown.*** [From *Jōmō Shimbun*, "Local Hot News: Pop Culture Tourism for Town Revitalization" (地域発ホット通信 聖地巡礼、町おこしに), August 30, 2012]

Driven by his desire to do something interesting and his new friendships, Arawi took a further step: he suggested to his friends that they form a band. Having started reading music magazines around this time [2] and influenced by the band boom that was underway, he must have decided he wanted to perform himself.

His friends were on board, and they formed a band called "Yayoi." They practiced playing popular Japanese songs of the time. This musical activity continued until they graduated from high school.

> ***In high school, I played the guitar. We practiced Unicorn, Mr. Children, BOØWY, and The Blue Hearts, and we naturally broke up when we graduated. The band name was "Yayoi." The name came from associating the "Asuka" (a name that can be read as a historical period) in "CHAGE & ASKA" with the "Yayoi" period.*** [From an interview for this book]

> ***(Upon hearing the news that the band Unicorn, which had been disbanded, was re-forming)***
> ***As someone who was in a band covering their songs in high school, I'm overjoyed.***
> ***"You'll forget me, so by then, I'll be able to see you right away."***

> ***A lyric that I didn't understand for 16 years, I understand it now*** [3].
> [From the kumomadori blog, "Take-off" (テ〜ィクオフ), February 6, 2009]

Arawi generally prefers to create alone rather than in collaboration with others. He later chose to become a manga artist precisely because he was attracted to the idea of being able to create art and stories by himself. In that sense, this period of working with others was an exception.

Perhaps his high school self sought out the collaboration of his friends because the loneliness of his junior high years still lingered. The joy of having friends he connected with and being able to express the things he found interesting likely inspired him to get into filmmaking and band activities.

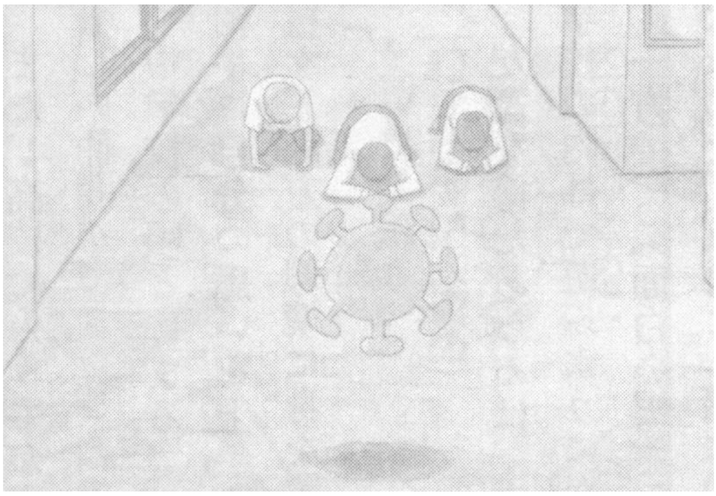
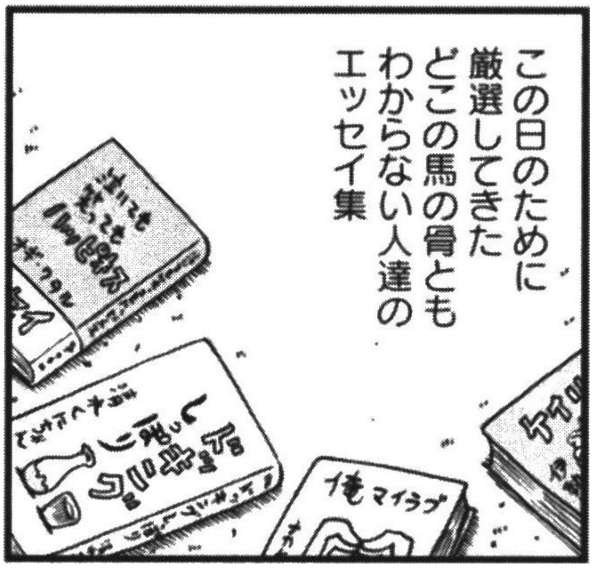


Illustration for the sponsor screen of anime *Nichijou*, Episode 6 (Included as a sticker with the limited edition DVD/Blu-ray Volume 3 of *Nichijou*). When this illustration was reprinted in *Helvetica Standard Italic* as *"Anime Sponsor Info Background Illustrations, " it was given the title "Surrender" and included the following comment: "This image depics a kamakura (snow-hut) appearing before Mr. Takasaki, Ogi, and Makoto, who surrender to it. It really reflects my high school days, when I often had to surrender to the karate club advisor, Mr. Osuga. This is pretty well-drawn. "*


この日のために
厳選してきた
どこの馬の骨とも
わからない人達の
エッセイ集
俺マイラブ

From *CITY* Volume 5, page 45: In an interview for this book, Arawi revealed that the names of the authors of the essay book featured in the manga were taken from four of his friends from high school. The way he borrowed their names while simultaneously referring to them as people "from who knows where" shows his affection and familiarity with his friends.

Gunma Prefectural Isesaki Commercial High School nameplate (Left) and school building (Right).
Photographed in May 2019.

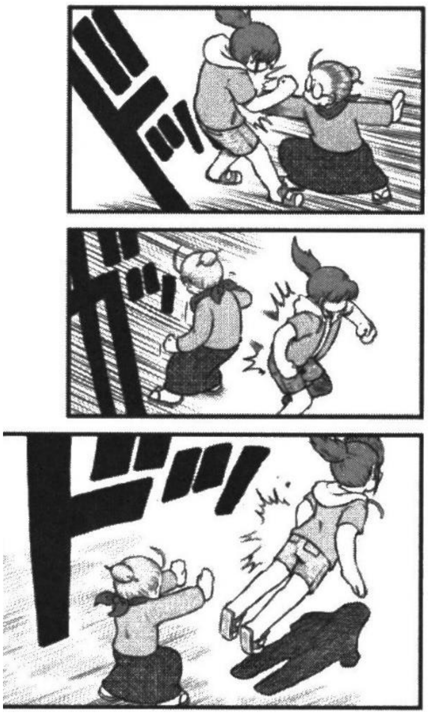
Watching Anime Alone #1

In high school, Arawi was busy with karate club training, as well as creative projects like video shooting and band activities with friends. During this period, he also became engrossed in competitive fighting games found in arcades. In particular, he was deeply immersed in the *Virtua Fighter* series, whose popularity had reached a social phenomenon level.

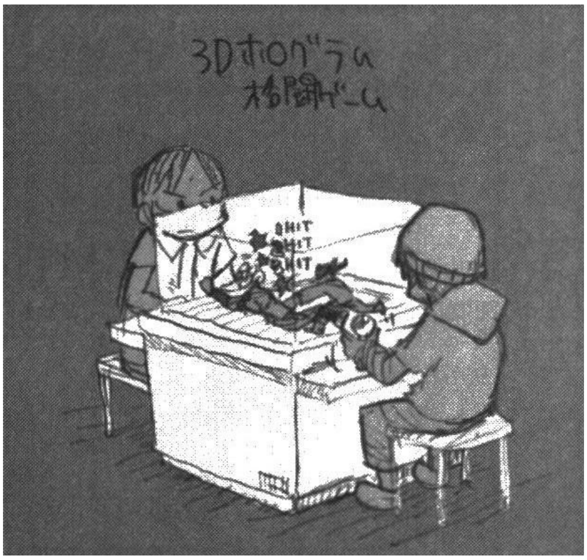
Later, when the sequel *Virtua Fighter 5* was launched, he spoke of visiting the arcade after a long time, reminiscing about his high school days.

> ***Virtua Fighter 5 came out, so I played it for the first time in a while.***
> ***Even if I don't have the same passion as before,***
> ***versus fighting games are still fun.***
> ***In high school, I was a terrifying kid who spent all my part-time job money on Virtua Fighter.***
> ***I was a truly terrifying kid who came down from Mt. Akagi.***
> ***A terrifying kid who came down from Mt. Akagi and also ate a lot of Fruche back then.***
> ***I've always used Jeffrey as my character.***
> ***For 5, I named him "Karate Love Skatch"*** [4].
> ***My record is 4 wins and 5 losses. Not bad.***
> ***I sometimes play at Shinjuku Sportsland or an arcade in Hachioji.***
> ***If you're going to challenge me, please go easy on me.***
> [From the kumomadori blog, "A Single, Short, Slender Step That Trumps Everything" (全てを凌駕する、か細くて短い一歩), August 3, 2006]

The arcade was a crucial place for communication, providing material for conversation with the friends he hung out with. Arawi sought out company to fill the loneliness he experienced in junior high, and this was reflected in his immersion in *Virtua Fighter*.



From *CITY* Volume 12, page 101: A character is depicted performing a move that imitates the "Hōgeki Unshin Sōkoshō" (崩撃雲身双虎掌) fighting technique of Akira Yūki, a character from the *Virtua Fighter* series.



From an illustration posted on Twitter on May 29, 2015: Arawi mentions a "Fighting game I thought AM2-ken would eventually make when I was playing Virtua Fighter 3." "AM2-ken" (AM2 研) refers to SEGA-AM2, the Sega subsidiary that developed the *Virtua Fighter* series.

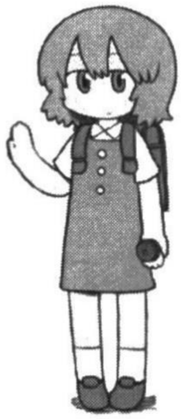
However, this desire for like-minded friends simultaneously gave rise to a new problem. While enjoying conversations with friends at the arcade, Arawi fell into a secret hobby that he couldn't share even with his closest companions.

The preference he hid from his close friends was watching anime. Due to his focus on karate practice and other activities after entering high school, Arawi hadn't watched TV anime for a long time. However, upon watching *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-Ohki*, he became an avid viewer of anime featuring bishōjo characters.

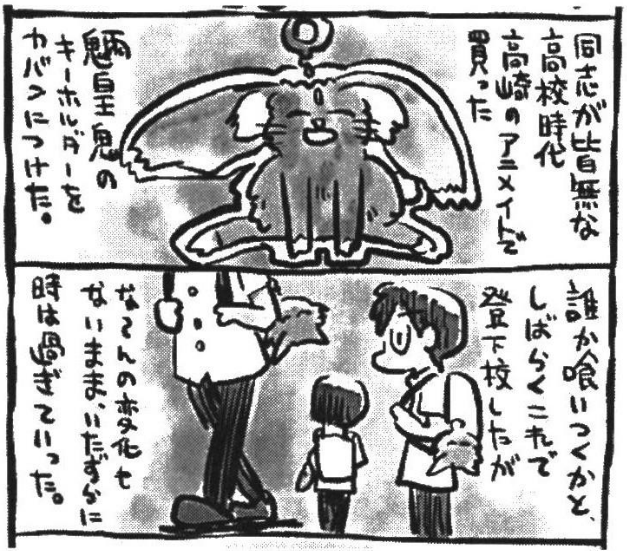
> ***Virtua Fighter 5 came out, so I played it for the first time in a while.***
> ***Even if I don't have the same passion as before,***
> ***versus fighting games are still fun.***
> ***In high school, I was a terrifying kid who spent all my part-time job money on Virtua Fighter.***
> ***I was a truly terrifying kid who came down from Mt. Akagi.***
> ***A terrifying kid who came down from Mt. Akagi and also ate a lot of Fruche back then.***
> ***I've always used Jeffrey as my character.***
> ***For 5, I named him "Karate Love Skatch"*** [4]***.***
> ***My record is 4 wins and 5 losses. Not bad.***
> ***I sometimes play at Shinjuku Sportsland or an arcade in Hachioji.***
> ***If you're going to challenge me, please go easy on me.***
> [From "Anime Story #7" (アニメ話⑦), *Monthly Newtype*, December 2018 issue]

While the hobby of anime appreciation began to gain acceptance in Japan in the 21st century, it was still often viewed with cold eyes by the public in the 1990s.

Consequently, while he could talk about his other hobbies freely, he couldn't reveal his anime interest even to his closest friends. Because of this, the loneliness he had felt in junior high didn't completely vanish; the feeling of having no peers with whom he could share his passion lingered in the corner of his heart.



Rei Ayanami from the "Mechatro WeGo x Eva Collaboration Series Volume 1: 'Zerogōki' + Rei Ayanami" (メカトロウィーゴ　エヴァコラボシリーズ Vol.1 "ぜろごうき" + 綾波レイ) package. Since 2020, Arawi has been in charge of drawing the package illustrations for collaboration merchandise between *Evangelion* and the Mechatro WeGo plastic model kits.



同志が皆無な高校時代高崎のアニメイトで買った
魎皇鬼のキーホルダーをカバンにつけた。
誰か喰いつくかと、しばらくこれで登下校したが
なんの変化もないまま、いたずらに時は過ぎていった。

From "Anime Story #8" (アニメ話⑧) in *Monthly Newtype*, January 2019 issue: This essay manga recounts Arawi's memory of attaching a Ryo-Ohki keychain (from *Tenchi Muyo!*) to his bag, hoping that a fellow anime fan would spot it, but no one ever noticed.

Watching Anime Alone #2

Despite being surrounded by friends in high school, Arawi couldn't confide in anyone about his anime interest, and the void in his heart for a kindred spirit remained. As a result, he dove even deeper into anime and bishōjo characters.

However, the foundation for his passion was laid well before high school. Let's trace the journey that led him to watch *Neon Genesis Evangelion* and *Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-Ohki*.

In elementary school, Arawi divided his favorite anime into two types: those with cute characters, like *Mashin Eiyūden Wataru* and *Ranma ½*, and those with compelling stories, like Castle in the Sky. He soon encountered an anime that combined both: *Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water*, which began airing shortly after he entered junior high in 1990.

Both *Nadia* and *Evangelion* were created under the same director (Hideaki Anno) and character designer (Yoshiyuki Sadamoto). Arawi likely started watching *Evangelion* because it reminded him of the excitement he felt when watching *Nadia* [5].

> ***I first entered the gateway to anime in the 5th grade.***
> ***I got the video for Laputa.***
> ***I was so engrossed in how interesting it was that I kept watching it.***
> ***Before I knew it, my sister was repeating Laputa too.***
> ***Laputa was running all year round in our living room.***
> ***This anime was different from Wataru or Ranma.***
> ***Even as an elementary school student, I vaguely thought that my favorite anime fell into two categories: "Character-focused" and "Story-focused."***
> ***And when I went to junior high, a major revolution occurred, combining both: Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water***
> [From "Anime Story #3" (アニメ話③), *Monthly Newtype*, August 2018 issue]

Shocked by *Nadia*, Arawi began exploring OVA (Original Video Animation). Unlike shows broadcast on terrestrial television, OVAs required more effort to watch. However, Arawi's uncle owned a video rental shop, giving him free access to borrow OVAs.

Tenchi Muyo!, which influenced him in high school, was also an OVA. He likely picked it up because he had already developed the habit of watching OVAs.

Other OVAs that impressed Arawi at the time included *Kosuke-sama Rikimaru-sama: Konpeitō no Ryū* (小助さま力丸さま　コンペイ島の竜, "Kosuke-sama Rikimaru-sama: The

Dragon of Konpei Island"), *Mobile Police Patlabor*, *Mobile Suit SD Gundam*, and *Uchū Kazoku Carlvinson* (宇宙家族カールビンソン, "Space Family Carlvinson").

Kosuke-sama Rikimaru-sama featured character designs by Akira Toriyama, the artist whose style Arawi felt "first evoked moe." *Patlabor* was the work that prompted him to start buying the anime magazine *Monthly Newtype* [6]. The deformed art styles of *SD Gundam* and *Carlvinson* solidified his preference for cuteness.

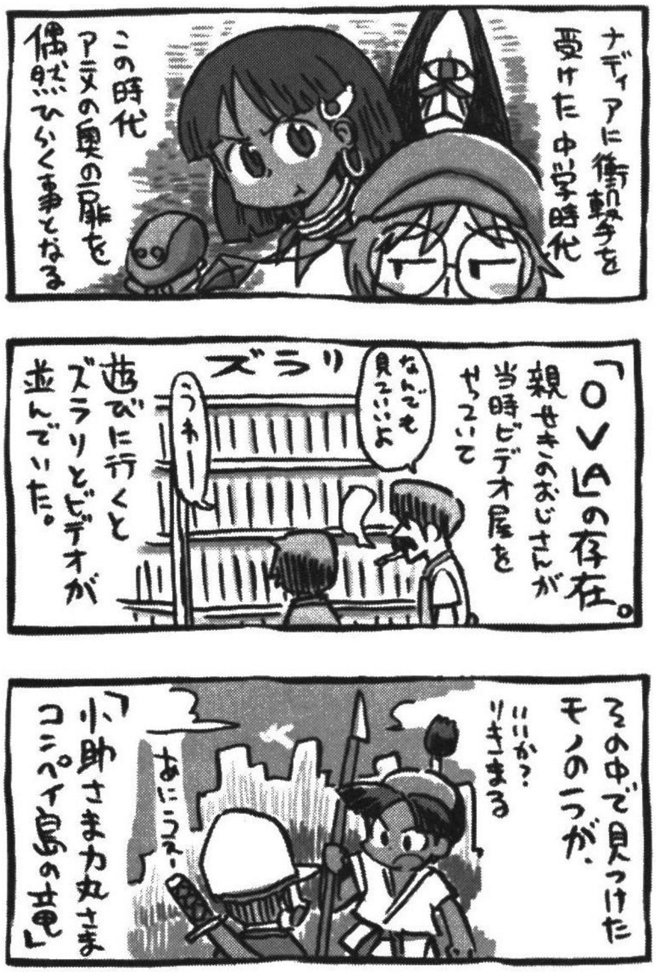
> ***My uncle ran a video shop at the time, and when I visited, there were rows of videos.***
> ***One of the things I found there was Kosuke-sama Rikimaru-sama: Konpeitō no Ryū.***
> ***I was completely captivated by the action, the music, the setting, and Toriyama's art.***
> ***Moreover, the sense of it being "my own private thing," not shown on TV, excited me immensely.***
> [From "Anime Story #4" (アニメ話④), *Monthly Newtype*, September 2018 issue]

> ***Opening the door to OVA at my uncle's house by chance.***
> ***One of those titles was Mobile Police Patlabor.***
> ***The characters were so appealing that I immediately started collecting the manga.***
> ***Collecting the manga after watching the anime had become my "Sunday" habit.***
> ***And in junior high, I bought Newtype for the first time, which often featured Patlabor on the cover.***
> ***From about this time, I started checking out anime information in magazines and rummaging through my uncle's OVA shelves.***
> [From "Anime Story #5" (アニメ話⑤), *Monthly Newtype*, October 2018 issue]

> ***In junior high, when I opened the door to OVA.***
> ***I want to introduce two works whose copied tapes I watched until they were worn out.***
> ***One is SD Gundam.***
> ***I only know a little about Gundam, but I watched SD Gundam a ton.***
> ***Because everyone in it was cute.***
> ***The other is Uchū Kazoku Carlvinson.***
> ***Again, all the characters in this one were cute.***
> ***I think Corona heavily influenced how I drew Hakase in Nichijou.***
> ***These two works were incorporated into the foundation of my sense of "kawaii."***
> [From "Anime Story #6" (アニメ話⑥), *Monthly Newtype*, October 2018 issue]

As mentioned, Arawi took a break from watching anime after entering high school due to the demands of karate practice. Therefore, his anime viewing history had a gap between his third year of junior high (1992) and his third year of high school (1995), when he became obsessed with *Evangelion* and *Tenchi Muyo!*.

However, during that time, the loneliness of not being able to connect with peers, which had started in junior high, persisted. The desperate desire for someone to share his passion led Arawi to take action: he returned to submitting postcards to magazines, just as he had in junior high.


ナディアに衝撃を受けた中学時代
この時代アニメの奥の扉を偶然ひらく事となる
「OVA」の存在。
親せきのおじさんが当時ビデオ屋をやっていて
なんでも見ていいよ
ズラリ
うわー！
遊びに行くとズラリとビデオが並んでいた。
その中で見つけたモノの一つが、
いいか？りきまる
あにうえー
「小助さま力丸さま コンペイ島の竜」

From "Anime Story #4," *Monthly Newtype*, September 2018 issue.

Art to Connect with Others, Art to Prove Himself

When Arawi's anime hobby reignited in his third year of high school, he began subscribing to *Dengeki PC Engine*. Initially, this magazine focused on the PC Engine console. However, it gradually increased its coverage of games featuring bishōjo characters. It was the perfect magazine for a high schooler who "was firmly walking down the path of a hidden otaku" [7].

Subscribing to Dengeki PC Engine was also closely related to his lack of peers who understood his anime hobby. The reader participation project that was popular in the magazine, *Megami Paradise*, filled that void.

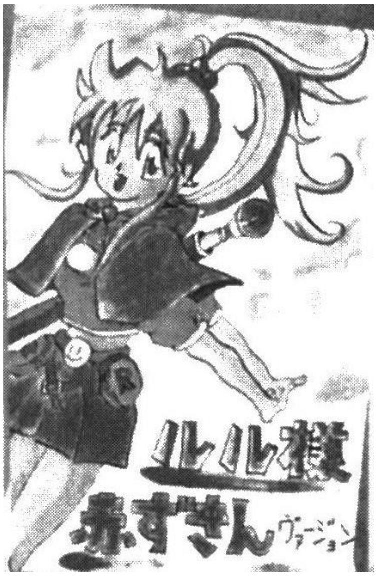
Megami Paradise was a contest where readers chose one of eight "Goddess" characters, sent in monthly support postcards, and competed in various reader games based on vote counts. Excellent game participants were recognized in the magazine, and the monthly ranking of the Goddesses fueled factional awareness and competition among readers, making it a huge success.

In the 1990s, before the internet became widespread, the means for students to connect with unseen peers were limited. *Megami Paradise* was a rare and unparalleled opportunity for readers with the same tastes to gather.

This is why Arawi was drawn to the project. Combined with his renewed enjoyment of writing submission postcards, he began his creative activity, driven by the desire to find fellow anime fans.

> ***I wanted friends. That desire grew stronger by the day, but I had no means.***
> ***So, from the remote countryside of Gunma, while munching on a cheese steamed bun, the action I took was submitting to a magazine.***
> ***I thought that if my work was published there, I could "belong to some kind of vague community of friends," and so I put pen to paper.***
> [From "Anime Story #8" (アニメ話⑧), *Monthly Newtype*, January 2019 issue]

Arawi's postcard was published soon after he started submitting. It was featured in a contest soliciting original costume ideas for the second installment of the *Megami Paradise* game. Although his costume idea wasn't used in the actual game, it can be seen on the announcement page for the award candidates in the October 1995 issue of *Dengeki PC Engine* [8].


ルルル様
赤ずきん ヴァージョン

From the costume submission contest in *Dengeki PC Engine*, October 1995 issue: Arawi submitted an illustration dressing Rurubell, the Goddess of Wind, in an original Little Red Riding Hood-style costume.

Arawi submitted postcards to *Megami Paradise* out of a single-minded desire for peers. In other words, he was drawing illustrations with the motivation of wanting to connect with others.

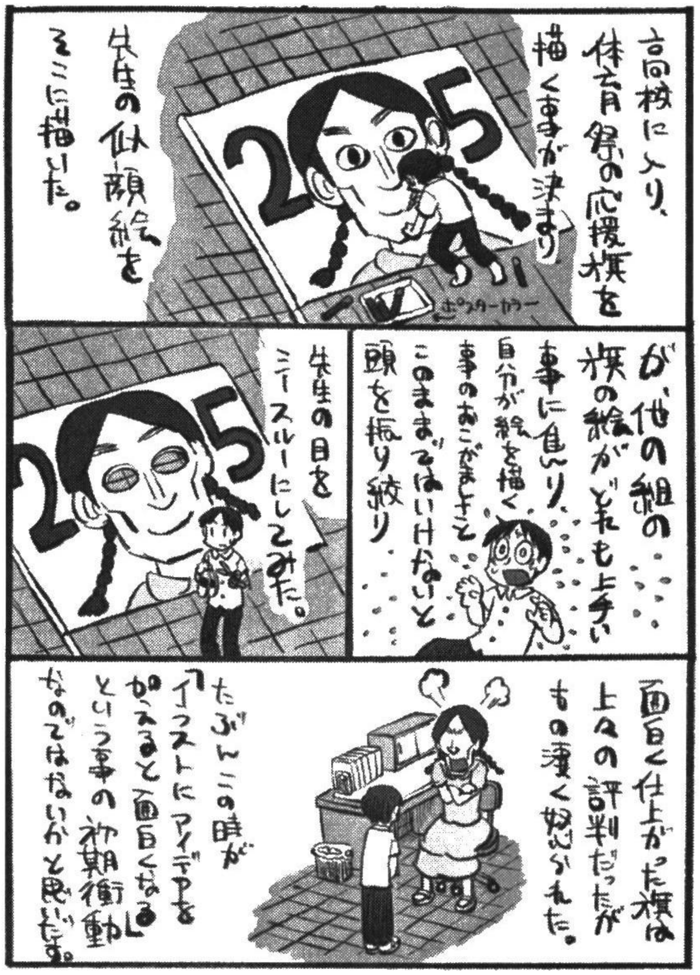
However, on reflection, this postcard submission was a departure from his previous thinking. In his elementary and junior high school years, he had aimed to complete unique creative works that only he could make, so that he could be acknowledged by others.

The work that more directly led to Arawi's current creative output was likely the class cheer banner he created for his high school sports festival, rather than the Goddess fan mail. In the essay manga "Initial Impulse," he recalled being able to draw his own unique picture on the cheer banner.

Entrusted with the illustration for the banner, Arawi initially drew a caricature of his homeroom teacher. However, seeing that the banners from other classes were much more skillfully drawn, he became intimidated. To somehow differentiate his work, he devised a trick: he cut out the eyes of the caricature to make them see-through. The uniquely designed banner earned praise, giving him the conviction that "adding an idea to a drawing makes it interesting."

In junior high, Arawi had spent his days and nights thinking of ideas different from others through his submissions to magazines and late-night radio. He also intuitively understood the importance of the element of silliness. The sports festival cheer banner was the experience that helped him grasp how to apply this to drawing.

The root of Arawi's identity as a creator—generating interesting works by adding silly yet original ideas, while still expressing what he loves—can be traced back to the high school sports festival. While submitting drawings to a magazine to connect with others, Arawi was also fortunate enough to have an opportunity to realize the strength of his own art.


高校に入り、体育祭の応援旗を描く事が決まり
先生の似顔絵をそこに描いた。
ポスターカラー
25
が、他の組の旗の絵がどれも上手い事に焦り、
自分が絵を描く事のおこがましさと
このままではいけないと頭を振り絞り
先生の目をシースルーにしてみた。
25
面白く仕上がった旗は上々の評判だったがもの凄く怒られた。
たぶんこの時が「イラストにアイデアを加えると面白くなる」という事の初期衝動なのではないかと思います。

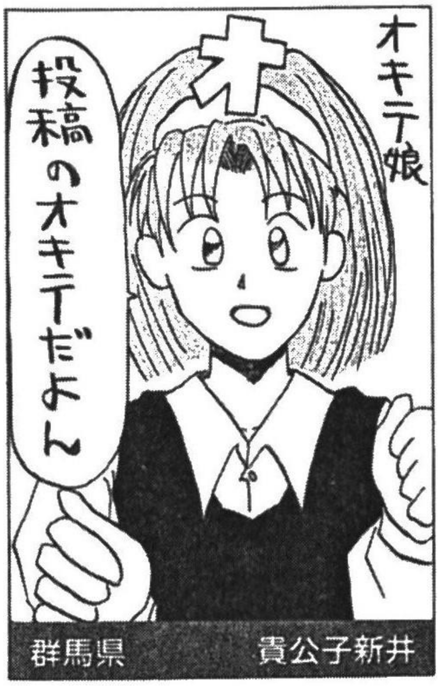
From "Initial Impulse" in *Monthly Newtype*, September 2019 issue: Arawi recalls that although the creatively devised cheer banner was popular, he was later severely scolded by his homeroom teacher.

Happiness from Making Someone Laugh

Three months after his piece was published in *Dengeki PC Engine*, Arawi's postcard was published again. The magazine this time was *Weekly Famitsū*, the game magazine that had been retitled and relaunched from *Famicom Tsūshin* (Issue 3, January 26, 1996).

When *Famitsū* relaunched, it made several changes to its reader submission projects. One of these was the illustration corner that decorated "Tōkō no Okite" (投稿のオキテ, "Rules for Submission"), the section introducing where to send submissions. In January 1996, with high school nearing its end, Arawi quickly noticed this new corner, sent in a postcard, and was accepted.

The illustration he drew was of an original character, "Okite Musume" (オキテ娘), inspired by the corner's title, "Tōkō no Okite." Since his previous *Dengeki PC Engine* submission was fan art for *Megami Paradise*, Okite-musume can be considered his first original work to be published in a commercial magazine.


オキテ娘
オ
投稿のオキテだよん
群馬県
貴公子新井

Arawi's illustration published in the "Tōkō no Okite" corner of *Weekly Famitsū*, January 26, 1996 issue.

What's interesting is that this illustration influenced subsequent submitters and formed a small culture. After Okite-musume was published, an unwritten rule took root in the "Tōkō no Okite" illustration corner: the word "Okite" had to be written somewhere in the drawing.

The *Famitsū* illustration can be seen as applying the lesson he learned from the sports festival cheer banner: that "adding an idea makes a drawing interesting." It is notable that at the end of his high school life, he was able to publish a drawing that satisfied both his desire to connect with others and his need to express his own individuality.

Having had postcards published in both *Dengeki PC Engine* and *Famitsū*, Arawi undoubtedly gained confidence. However, he couldn't just celebrate innocently, as high school was ending and he had to decide on his path after graduation.

So, what career did he consider at this point? He wasn't even remotely thinking of becoming a professional manga artist, his current job. In 1996, the 18-year-old was pursuing a completely different dream.

To understand this dream, we need to revisit his high school friendships. In high school, Arawi had rallied his friends to practice with their music band. At the same time, he was himself drawn in by a friend to choose a future path as a comedian.

> ***One of my close friends in high school knew a lot about comedy. One day, I watched a comedy video with that friend and was shocked. I particularly remember a skit performed by "LaLaLa," "Homare," and "Jarizumu." That naturally led to the idea of "Let's try doing comedy!"*** [10]**.**
> [From an interview for this book]

One of Arawi's friends, Nakayama, who had helped film videos and formed the music band, was an expert on kamigata (Kansai region) comedy culture. This was because he had tapes recorded by an acquaintance in Osaka of Kansai local manzai and skit programs, such as *Bakushō Booing* (爆笑 BOOING, "Explosive Laughter Booing") and *Sungē! Best 10* (すんげー！Best 10, "Awesome! Best 10," The official English title is "Soon Gey! Best 10") [11].

Arawi began watching the comedy programs with Nakayama. In the 1990s, without internet streaming, it would have been impossible for a student in Gunma Prefecture to be inspired by a Kansai local program. Yet, his friendship provided a link to study comedy from a distant region.

The two were deeply impressed by the passion of the young Osaka comedians' manzai and skits. It didn't take long for them to dream of moving to Tokyo after graduation to become professional comedians.

The existence of the comedian fulfilled the criteria of "somehow liking" that Arawi had cultivated. The act of making people laugh with comical words and actions is bright, pop, and allows for the full expression of one's individuality. The essence of a comedian's hilarious gags lies in silliness, and they can even impart value to things that seem meaningless or useless. Above all, the comedian seemed like the ideal profession: one where you can convey what you find interesting to others.

In addition, Arawi was thinking back to his childhood memories. He recalled that "since elementary school, I wanted to stand in front of people and do something funny" [12].

> ***Making someone laugh by doing something. Looking back, that came naturally to me in elementary school. The lingering memory of that time might have been one of the reasons I wanted to become a comedian.*** [From an interview for this book]

In his childhood, making his friends and family smile and laugh was a moment of happiness. That is why he vaguely yearned to be a comedian, not just for his own sake, but out of a desire to spread happiness to those around him.

This desire was forgotten during junior high but surged back during his time with his high school friends. It was a natural progression to aim for the world of comedy, a career that could satisfy both desires: to brighten others' lives and to enjoy himself.

Thus, Arawi and Nakayama, aspiring comedians, began practicing comedy in addition to their band practices during their third year of high school.

The Rain Has Stopped, Let's Go Outside

After deciding to become comedians, Arawi and his friend Nakayama began practicing skits. However, at this time, they didn't write original scripts, but rather limited themselves to imitating professional comedians. Specifically, they performed a skit by the duo Jarizumu that had been featured on the show *Sungē! Best 10* [13].

Jarizumu specialized in comedy where the boke (ボケ, "funny man"), Watanabe, played an eccentric character, and the tsukkomi (ツッコミ, "straight man"), Yamashita, highlighted the humor by reacting strongly despite being thrown off balance. In Arawi's words, this type of humor was "doing something conventional within something surreal."

Looking back, Arawi enjoyed skits that were "doing something conventional within something surreal" even in elementary school, such as those on the variety show *Kato-chan Ken-chan Gokigen TV* (加トちゃんケンちゃんごきげんテレビ). This suggests that the skits he performed in high school might be pointed to as the origin that nurtured Arawi's comedic sensibility. In fact, the type of gag Arawi specialized in shortly after *Nichijou* began serialization was precisely the kind of humor where a rational person is at the mercy of a bizarre character.

> ***I definitely watched a lot of comedy shows. I was more of a Kato-chan Ken-chan person than an Oretachi Hyōkin Zoku person; I preferred The Drifters. If you watch that now, it's incredibly surreal. Like the one where two detectives are chased by an airplane for no reason and it just ends with the plane exploding—it's so surreal. But the gags in between and the methods they use are very conventional. The main axis is surreal, but the things they do are conventional. I preferred that style because you could laugh at the simple gags even if you didn't know anything else. I think Hyōkin Zoku was doing something surreal within something conventional, while The Drifters was doing something conventional within something surreal...***
> [From *Chorus*, "The History of Manga Vol.23: Keiichi Arawi," March 2009 issue] [14]

Arawi absorbed and attempted to express many different types of humor throughout the long serialization of his manga. So while it's not a generalization, it's certainly plausible that the comedic sensibility he performed and mastered first-hand in his student years was alive in *Nichijou* [15].

However, at that time, Arawi and Nakayama had only the desire to be comedians, with no concrete prospects. If this state of inertia had continued, they might never have seriously pursued a career in comedy. But a mysterious turn of events gave their dream a push.

In November 1995, a cultural festival was held at Takasaki Shōka Junior College, not far from their high school. The comedy duo Kaijarisuigyo (海砂利水魚, now Cream Stew [くりぃむしちゅー]) members Shinya Ueda and Teppei Arita were invited as guests. Kaijarisuigyo were popular comedians who had gained prominence on the smash-hit 1990s variety show *Tamori no Vocabula Tengoku* (タモリのボキャブラ天国, "Tamori's Vocabulary Heaven"). For high school students who dreamed of becoming comedians, they were a must-meet presence.

Arawi and Nakayama eagerly headed to the cultural festival. The live performance by Kaijarisuigyo they witnessed that day became the decisive factor that propelled them toward becoming comedians.

> ***During their free talk at the cultural festival live, Kaijarisuigyo brought up the topic, "Is anyone here aiming to be a comedian?" When my friend and I raised our hands, we were suddenly pulled up onto the stage. I remember doing something akin to a short skit.***
> ***After the show, we went to Kaijarisuigyo's dressing room and asked, "Please take us on as your apprentices!" Their answer was perfectly reasonable: "Talk to our agency after you graduate from high school." So, we decided to knock on the agency's door after graduating.***
> [From an interview for this book]

That day, the dream of becoming a comedian evolved into the concrete goal of joining the same agency as Kaijarisuigyo. With a goal set, their subsequent actions were swift. The two immediately went to Tokyo after graduating high school and visited Prime One (now Prime), the talent agency Kaijarisuigyo belonged to. Though they had no guarantee of success, the agency warmly welcomed the two aspiring young comedians. Arawi and his friend were officially accepted into the entertainment industry as trainee comedians.

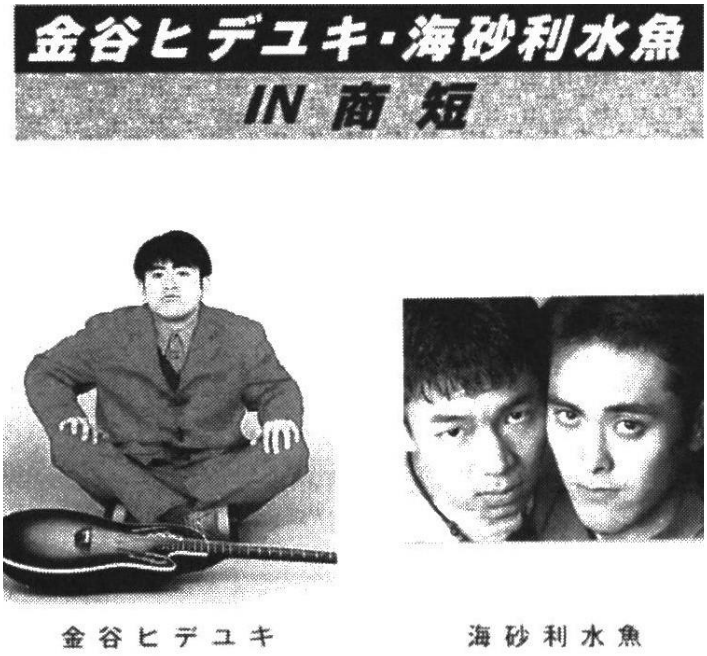
Arawi later featured the song "After the Rain" (雨上がり) by the band Remioromen (who have ties to Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture) on his website, Himarayairuka [16]. The lyric he quoted, "The scenery reflected changes, we change, only the memories increase," seems to symbolize his feelings as he left his familiar Gunma Prefecture to pursue his dream of becoming a comedian.

The word "rain" recalls his childhood memories of rainy days, which were fundamental to his creative development. In his early years, Arawi discovered the comfort of creating his own world inside the house, where no one else was present and only the sound of rain could be heard.

Using a somewhat metaphorical expression, one could say that while Arawi's childhood was a time of "rain," his high school years were a time of "after the rain." While in elementary and junior high school he tended to immerse himself in his own world, in high school, he sought out peers and gained many connections with the outside world.

He had the members of the karate club, irreplaceable friends, and the magazine readers with whom he supported bishōjo characters, all counting as connections. Ultimately, his encounter with Kaijarisuigyo determined the future of a young man who was about to finish his school life.

The rain, which had separated him from the surrounding world and given him both solitude and comfort, had stopped falling. Arawi temporarily bid farewell to his private world and took his first step into the world outside. Though anxious, the unseen place he was heading to in Tokyo was filled with the expectation that something great was about to happen. The things he wanted to challenge in this new world would rapidly increase.



金谷ヒデユキ・海砂利水魚

IN 商短

金谷ヒデユキ

海砂利水魚

From "Green Campus Takasaki Shōka Junior College No. 13" (published October 6, 1995), page 7: The announcement states that the comedy duo Kaijarisuigyo and comedian Hideyuki Kanaya would appear as guests at the cultural festival. Hideyuki Kanaya was also popular on Vocabulary Tengoku along with Kaijarisuigyo and was likely invited due to his connection as a Gunma Prefecture native.

---

[1]. See an interview for this book.

[2]. See "My Favorites: My 3 Favorite Discs Volume. 96: Keiichi Arawi" (マイ・フェイバリッツ 私の好きな 3 枚 Vol.96 あらゐけいいち) in *Monthly Newtype*, March 2017 issue. Arawi recalls that he started reading music magazines in his first year of high school and learned that Kenji Ozawa of the band "Flipper's Guitar," whom he liked in junior high, had started a solo career. Kenji Ozawa's "Inu wa Hoeru ga Caravan wa Minami ni Susumu" (The Dogs Bark, But the Caravan Moves South) (1993): I started looking at music magazines in high school. Flipper's Guitar had broken up, and he was going solo. I eagerly went out and bought it, only to find the voice was different! Though disappointed, I kept listening, and the more I listened, the more captivated I became. The songs flowed from my Aiwa headphone stereo during my commute to and from school. They perfectly matched the agricultural roads of Gunma.

[3]. The lyric Arawi is quoting is from the Unicorn's 8th single, "Wonderful Days" (すばらしい日々) (1993).

[4]. "Karate Love Skatch" is derived from a fictional work within Seiki Tsuchida's manga *Henshū-Ō* (編集王, "Editing King") (1993–1997). He likely chose this name because of his association with being in the karate club in high school.

[5]. In Helvetica Standard note, "Fragments of Daily Life 12" (日々の断片 12, April 19, 2022), Arawi shared his thoughts after watching the final film in the Evangelion series, *Evangelion: 3.0 + 1.0 Thrice Upon a Time*, connecting it with his high school memories: *"The first time I saw Evangelion was when I was in high school, so it was a long time ago. Since then, I've watched all the movies one way or another. But I honestly don't understand most of the story. I just enjoyed following the characters, the action felt good, and the visuals were cool. [...] Even watching this final movie, honestly, I didn't quite understand what they were talking about as it headed toward the end. I didn't quite understand what they were doing, either. But I was moved and got teary-eyed. I think the random rush of many good, bad, and strange emotions while watching was because I was viewing it in comparison to my real self, who has been watching it since high school. "*

[6]. The first issue of *Monthly Newtype* Arawi bought was the October 1990 issue, which featured an illustration from *Mobile Police Patlabor* on the cover. In Helvetica Standard note, "Q&A #12 " (質問応答 第 12 回, July 31, 2022), he also listed director Mamoru Oshii's *Mobile Police Patlabor* film series as an influential anime.

[7]. See "Submission and Creation #2" (投稿と創作②) in *Monthly Newtype*, April 2019 issue.

[8]. The second game in the *Megami Paradise* series, *Megami Paradise II*, was released as PC-FX game software in 1997 after repeated development delays. Arawi mentioned owning a PC-FX in the essay manga "Memories with Master" in *CoroCoro Aniki* Issue 5, but he does not appear to have played *Megami Paradise II*.

[9]. The reader submission section of *Famicom Tsūshin*, "Famitsū Chōnaikai," included a notice titled "Tōkō no Okite," which listed how and where to send postcards. This corner originally provided only a brief comment from the editorial department and had no space for reader submissions.

However, starting with the April 1995 issue, submitted illustrations and photos with no specific theme began to be published in the column next to "Tōkō no Okite." In the first issue of the retitled magazine *Weekly Famitsū* (Combined Issue of January 5 & 12, 1996), an unusual postcard that introduced the submission method and address for "Famitsū Chōnaikai" within the postcard itself was accepted. In the issue two weeks later (January 26, 1996), Arawi's "Okite-musume" illustration, which personified "Tōkō no Okite," was published.

From then on, it became the established convention for postcards sent to the "Tōkō no Okite" illustration corner to include the phrase "Okite" along with the illustration. This unwritten rule can be attributed to Arawi's illustration. "Okite-musume" was the origin of the "Tōkō no Okite" corner that continued for years.

[10]. "La La La," "Homare" (誉), and "Jarizumu" (ジャリズム) all disbanded by the end of the 1990s. However, Tamura, the tsukkomi (straight man) for La La La, is currently active as the comedian Kenji Tamura; Endō of Homare is active as TV writer Kei Endō; and Watanabe, the boke (funny man) for Jarizumu, is active as a rakugo artist and TV writer, Sandai Katsura, as of 2023.

[11]. See an interview for this book.

[12]. See the interview published in *Tia's Magazine 89*.

[13]. See an interview for this book.

[14]. Although not directly related to Arawi's experience, the concept for the anime version of *Nichijou* was heavily influenced by 1970s variety shows. Director Tatsuya Ishihara, when adapting *Nichijou*, told Arawi, "How about we make it like a variety show, with a rapid-fire succession of skits, like *Kyosen x Maetake Geba Geba 90-pun!* (巨泉×前武ゲバゲバ90分！, Kyosen x Maetake Geba Geba 90 Minutes!, 1969–1971) or *Curricula Machine* (カリキュラマシーン, 1974–1978)?" [From *Monthly Anime Style* Volume 5, "Interview with Director Tatsuya Ishihara and Assistant Director Taichi Ishidate: An Adventure Concerning Nichijou" (石原立也監督・石立太一副監督インタビュー『日常』をめぐる冒険)]

[15]. In the interview "Young Artists Ask 'The Secret of Manga!,'" Arawi mentioned that he also watched *8-ji da yo! Zen'in Shūgō* (8時だヨ！全員集合, "It's 8 o'clock! Gather Around, Everyone!") (1969–1985), the precursor to *Kato-chan Ken-chan*. I have things I've watched since way back. For example, TV shows like *8-ji da yo! Zen'in Shūgō* and *Oretachi Hyōkin Zoku* (オレたちひょうきん族, "What a Hilarious Guys We are") (1981-1989). And past works, the image I have in my mind can sometimes be more interesting. When I watch shows I actually liked, I sometimes think, "This is funny, but I'd want to do it this way!"

Also, in an interview for this book, Arawi cited the pop music of EPO and Tatsuro Yamashita, who sang the ending themes for *Oretachi Hyōkin Zoku*, as one of the image songs for *Nichijou*. He also cited ELLIS's "A Thousand Nights and One Morning" (千の夜と一つの朝) (1991) and Yumi Matsutōya's "November's April Fool" (十一月のエイプリルフール) (1993), which were the ending songs for the Fuji TV variety shows *Ucchan Nanchan no Yaru Nara Yaraneba* (ウッチャンナンチャンのやるならやらねば！, "If Ucchan and Nanchan Are Going to Do It, They Have to Do It") (1990–1993) and *Beat Takeshi no Tsukurikata* (ビートたけしのつくり方, "How to Make Beat Takeshi") (1993–1994). (For other image songs for *Nichijou*, refer to Note 4 in "Primary Experience #1" and Note 16 in "So Many Things I Want to Do #2").

[16]. See Himarayairuka, June 11, 2003.

So Many Things I Want to Do #2: After Moving to Tokyo (1996–2002)

City Nights and Spotlights

In April 1996, after graduating from high school, Arawi and his friend Nakayama moved from Gunma Prefecture to the Tokyo area to begin their new lives as comedians. While they technically rented a place in Nishikawaguchi, Saitama Prefecture, for rent reasons, it was nonetheless an advance into the metropolitan area.

The first thing that astonished the young man who had left his hometown was the brightness of the night in Nishikawaguchi. As noted many times, Arawi's deeply ingrained primary experience included a fear of the night. His hometown of Tomita-machi had no late-night businesses or streetlights, making the late hours a frightening time shrouded in darkness.

In contrast, Nishikawaguchi was bustling with people even after dark. Lights lined the streets, traffic signals glowed, and late-night stores and apartment buildings were illuminated. The city he first lived in seemed incredibly "sparkly." The streets of Nishikawaguchi brightly illuminated the future path of the dreaming 18-year-old.

> ***The place I lived after graduating high school. I thought it was Tokyo, but it was Nishikawaguchi, Saitama. Coming out of rural Gunma, the first thing that surprised me was how bright the night was. I thought Saitama and Gunma would be the same, but Nishikawaguchi was very urban; there were a lot of streetlights, a lot of stores, a lot of apartments, a lot of traffic lights, and a lot of people. The town somehow looked very sparkly. I wondered why, maybe this is how it feels to live in Disneyland. I remember being very excited just because the night was bright, right after graduating high school.*** [From Helvetica Standard note, "Fragments of Daily Life 5: Scary Pictures Even in the Daytime," February 17, 2021]

To achieve their dream, Arawi and Nakayama joined the talent agency Prime One and started their activities as the duo "Gaucho" (ガウチョ). The name "Gaucho" reportedly came from both a steakhouse in Nishikawaguchi and a Steely Dan song.

They weren't immediately given opportunities to perform, however. For the time being, they worked as attendants (apprentices) for Hirokazu Yamaguchi, who was then the representative of Prime One [1]. Yamaguchi was a senior comedian who had achieved great popularity in the 1980s as part of the duo "Conte Yamaguchi-kun to Takeda-kun" with Takatoshi Takeda.

Although their pre-move goal of becoming apprentices to Kaijarisuigyo was not directly fulfilled, Kaijarisuigyo had also served as attendants to Yamaguchi and Takeda. In a roundabout way, Arawi and Nakayama were positioned as their "kyōdai-deshi" (literally "brother-disciples"). Another comedian they became close to was Toru Kirihata (now Tōru Kirihata), who was working as part of the duo Hemoglobin. Arawi and Kirihata worked together on gigs and live shows organized by the agency [2].

Gaucho primarily performed short skits in their live shows. Arawi, who was in charge of brainstorming ideas, worked day and night to devise gags, performing the comical actions and dialogue with his partner.

Currently, no footage of the skits Gaucho performed remains available for direct confirmation. However, it is a well-known fact that the commercial works Arawi would later publish are gag manga. The memory of Gaucho is inherited as a distant ancestor to *Nichijou*, *CITY*, *Amamiya-san*, and *Helvetica Standard*. The experience of constantly devising and performing short skits on stage during his time as an aspiring comedian was the very origin of this genre.

About two years after their formation, Gaucho began to gain momentum. Perhaps they had grown comfortable with their short skits, as they started getting good results in television auditions aimed at young comedians.

Their first appearance on terrestrial television was on the variety show *Downtown no Gottsu Ee Kanji* (ダウンタウンのごっつええ感じ, "Downtown's Feeling Real Good"), broadcast on May 11, 1997. The show featured a segment called "Kōhaku Owarai Reaction Dai Gassen" (紅白お笑いリアクション大合戦, "Red and White Comedy Reaction Battle"), where young comedians competed to perform funny reactions. Arawi, invited as one of the young comedians, wore a bib that read "Gaucho Arai" and attempted gags with his partner.

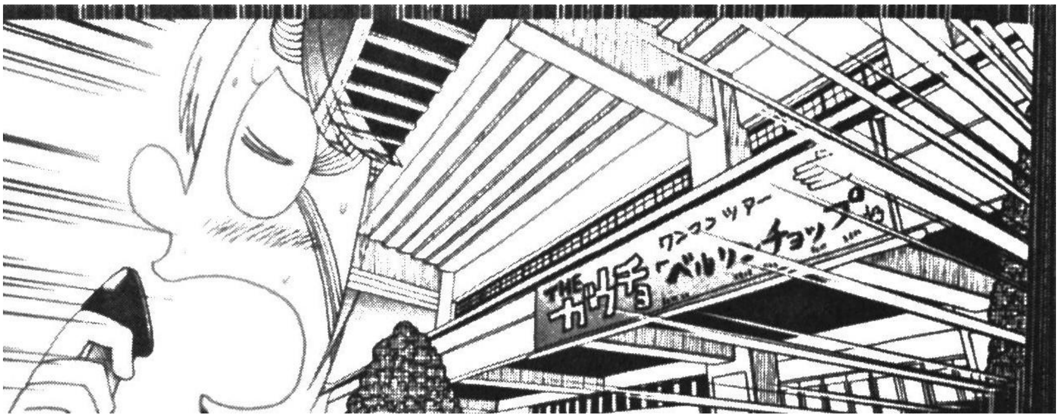
However, Gaucho's highlight was cut during editing and did not air. Their appearance was limited to a brief moment when a large group of performers crowded the camera to pump up the crowd.

Their next program was *Owarai Kōjō Iinkai: Warawase-ro!* (お笑い向上委員会 笑わせろ！, "Comedy Improvement Committee: Make Them Laugh!"). This program, hosted by Kaijarisuigyo, broadcast live footage of young comedians, and Gaucho was featured in a digest.

Later, they got a chance to perform a one-minute skit on *Ōsama no Brunch* (王様のブランチ, "King's Brunch"), a show where Kaijarisuigyo also served as location reporters. This was their first chance to deliver their brand of humor to television viewers [3].

Arawi, who was initially dizzy from the bright nights of Nishikawaguchi when he first moved to the city, was bathed in the spotlights of the stage the following year. It goes without saying that the young man, who was also increasing his television appearances as an aspiring comedian, seemed "sparkly."

While the city can be glamorous, it is often criticized for its negative side, where human desires swirl. However, Arawi did not form a bad impression of the city. Although he would face further hardships, it is worth noting that he was always rescued by the brightness of the city at night and never regretted moving to Tokyo.


THE ガウチョ
ワンマンツアー
「ベルリ チョップ」

From *CITY* Volume7, page 123: A visual-kei band featured in the manga was named "The Gaucho" (The ガウチョ). Arawi likely used the name "Gaucho" while reflecting on the two passions of his youth: his music band and his comedian duo.

Image from the *Downtown no Gottsu Ee Kanji* segment "Kōhaku Owarai Reaction Dai Gassen," broadcast May 11, 1997. At the 0:04:14 mark, Arawi can be seen on the left side of the screen wearing a bib that reads "ガウチョ 新井" (Gaucho Arai).

The Inability to "Perform"

In 1997, while starting to appear on variety shows, Arawi also worked as an extra in two film productions.

The first was *Open House*, based on a novel by Hitonari Tsuji. The cast included comedian and actor Moro Moro'oka (モロ師岡), who was also signed to Prime One at the time. Arawi was likely cast as an extra through their shared agency connection. Indeed, Arawi's role was a camera assistant to Moro'oka Moro's character, the cameraman. The assistant's backstory was that he'd been rigorously trained in a sports-club-style hierarchy by his superior. Consequently, Arawi's acting consisted of nothing more than delivering crisp responses like "I'm sorry!" and "Yes, sir!" when unjustly scolded [4].

The second film was the V-Cinema (direct-to-video) title, *La Ruban: The Murder Case of the SM Club Owner* (〜ラ・ルバン〜 SM 倶楽部オーナー殺人事件). Moro Moro'oka also appeared in this film as a main detective character. Like *Open House*, this acting job likely came through the agency. Here, Arawi played a forensic specialist, acting out the scene of taking photos of the victim's body at the crime scene [5].

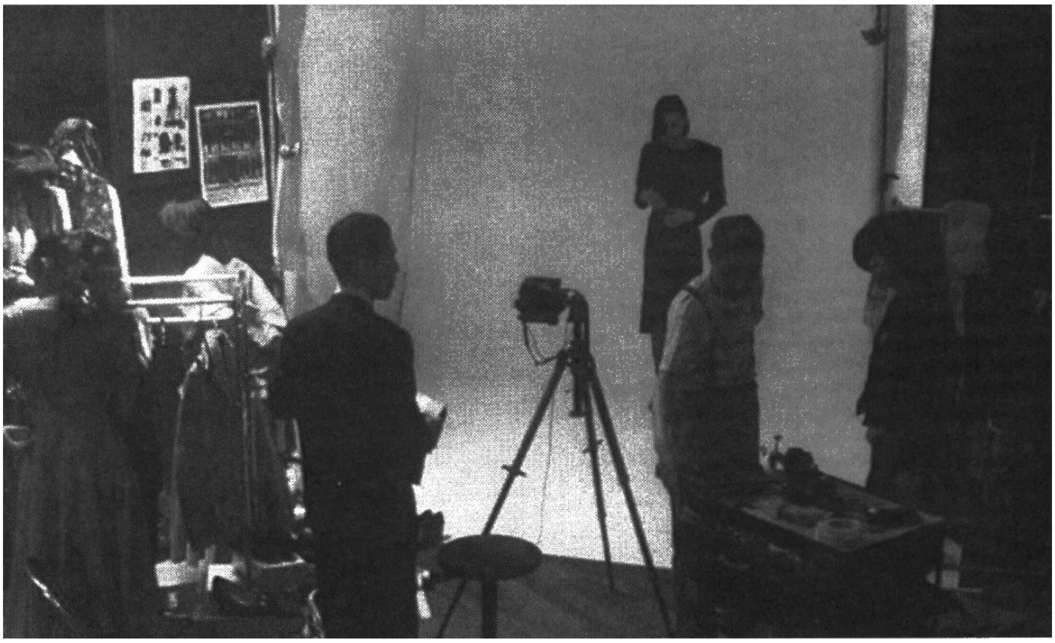


Image from film *Open House*, playback time 0:17:39. The person on the far right of the screen is Arawi, who is about to be slapped on the head by the cameraman, Moro Moro’oka.

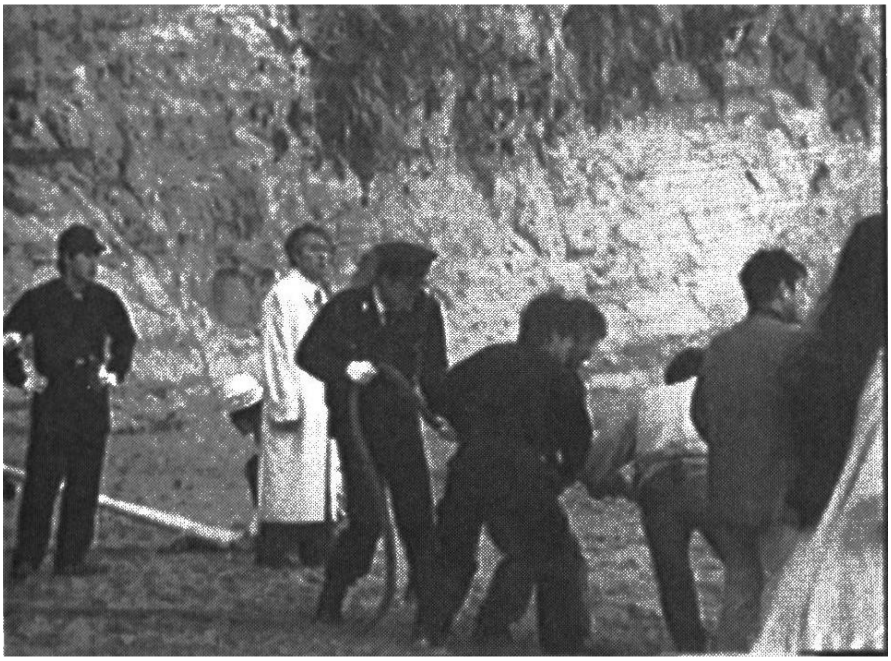


Image from film *La Ruban*, playback time 0:02:01. Arawi is the person in the forensic uniform standing on the far left. The detective in the white coat to Arawi's right is Moro Moro'oka.

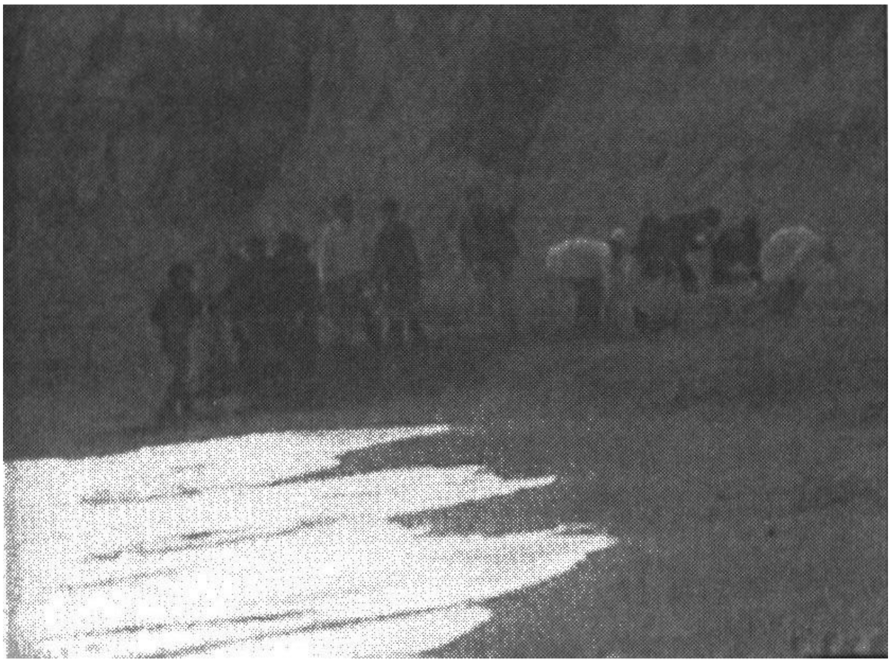


Image from film *La Ruban*, playback time 1:00:07. As Arawi recalled, he is shown taking photos of the body in the back right of the screen.

Although his screen time was minimal, Arawi was appearing on variety shows and in films, and he continued to perform at comedy live shows. For a rookie comedian in his second year after moving to Tokyo, this was a decent start.

However, the following year, Arawi began to feel doubt. He was seized by the anxiety that continuing as a comedian would lead nowhere. The factors that accumulated included economic hardship—he couldn't sustain his life on comedy work alone; the reality of being relegated to an attendant for senior comedians; and the frustration of being able to come up with skit ideas but being unable to perform them well.

These factors led him to take the action he had been considering: he informed the agency of his intention to quit being a comedian. The exact period is unknown, but he is thought to have left Prime One around 1998–1999, when he was about 20 or 21 years old.

> ***The life of a comedian while working part-time meant I literally couldn't eat. I was so hungry that I lived a precarious life, secretly taking ketchup from the karaoke box where I worked part-time to stave off starvation.*** [From an interview for this book]

> ***Looking back now, I feel I was often "unprepared." But back then, I didn't know how to prepare. The system of being an attendant to senior comedians didn't suit me. I felt that "performing" wasn't right for me. More than anything, the biggest reason for quitting was that I couldn't find a "sense of achievement" or a "breakthrough."*** [From an interview for this book]

Arawi had initially aimed to become a comedian because he thought it was a profession where he could convey what he found interesting to others. However, no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't grasp a sense of achievement, nor did a chance for his efforts to be recognized easily come his way.

It is true that he could have toughed it out in the entertainment world, fighting tooth and nail to become a comedian. But in this line of work, which required performing in front of people, once confidence is lost, it is difficult to regain.

Thus, after fighting on the front lines of the entertainment industry for about two to three years, Arawi chose to leave Prime One.

Yesterday's Self Would Be Surprised #1

Arawi gave up his dream of becoming a comedian, and the duo Gaucho disbanded. Nakayama also left Prime One, and both began exploring different paths. So, what did Arawi aim for next? A job, outside of the entertainment world, that would allow him to express his authentic self was not easy to find.

One activity he was involved in around the time he quit comedy was a music band. Arawi joined as the vocalist in a band led by a close relative in Tokyo named Hiroshi [6].

Their band activity primarily centered on covering the punk rock band Hi-Standard. Hi-Standard's music had a huge presence in the late 1990s Japanese music scene. Hiroshi and the others were likely influenced by the popular music they were exposed to, particularly melodic hardcore. Arawi still seems to have a strong emotional connection to Hi-Standard, as he later tweeted about watching a live performance DVD. The song mentioned, "Stay Gold," is about looking back on the youthful days spent chasing dreams with friends. It must have deeply resonated with Arawi, who had pursued dreams with Gaucho and the band.

> ***I watched Hi-Standard's Air Jam 2011. The opening song "Stay Gold" had my tear ducts in trouble.*** [From the author's comment at the end of *Monthly Shōnen Ace*, April 2012 issue]

However, the period he dedicated to music was not very long. Since Arawi lived in Nishikawaguchi and Hiroshi lived in a different area of Tokyo, continuing the band activities became difficult. As a result, the music band naturally dissolved around 1999.

After giving up on being a comedian and quitting music, Arawi spent a period focusing on nothing in particular, earning a living through a part-time job cleaning windows on buildings [7]. The only significant change was moving from Nishikawaguchi to Kōenji, Tokyo, and he spent his days without finding anything he could immerse himself in [8].

Arawi finally encountered something that captured his heart in 2000–2001. During this period, he began practicing day and night with the goal of becoming a professional skateboarder.

With a new skateboard in hand, Arawi frequented Sanshinomori Park in Suginami Ward, not far from Kōenji, to practice [9].

杉並区立
蚕糸の森公園

Stone monument in front of Sanshinomori Park. Photographed in October 2019.

> ***I'd go to the park, and there would be maybe four or five people. I'd skate with those guys. We weren't close, but we'd talk if we ran into each other. I could draw a whole chapter just on the process of joining that group. [...] It's absolutely impossible now. I guess the feeling of "I can get better if I do this" was stronger.*** [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]

What's particularly noteworthy is that Arawi had never skated before in his life, nor had he ever aspired to be a skateboarder. To an outside observer, his passion for a completely unfamiliar sport must have seemed strange.

However, Arawi's goal was precisely the act of taking surprising action. His immersion in the unfamiliar sport of skateboarding stemmed from a kind of desire for transformation—to become a completely different person.

> ***The day before, I didn't know the first thing about skating, but the moment I thought, "If I aimed to be a skateboarder, could I become a completely different version of myself?" an internal time paradox was activated. I couldn't resist the urge to surprise my current, ordinary self. I remember going to a skate shop the next day, buying a Black Label deck and I-path shoes, and starting to skate.*** [From Helvetica Standard note, "The Connection of Things and Personal Revolution" (物事の繋がりと自分革命), February 22, 2022]

While practicing skateboarding, Arawi would ask himself: If my past self were to time-travel to the present, how would he react to seeing me now? If the person from yesterday witnessed his future self enthusiastically skateboarding, he would surely be surprised and flustered.

Skating, Arawi felt amused imagining the bewildered look on his yesterday's self. He also gained a sense of fulfillment from stepping into a new world. In this way, the young man in his early twenties felt a sense of achievement in his life as an aspiring skateboarder. However, the essence of this satisfaction, at least initially, was not the appeal of skateboarding itself. He jumped into the unknown world of the sport purely for the enjoyment of seeing himself transform into a completely different person.

Yesterday's Self Would Be Surprised #2

Arawi called the impulse to jump into the unknown and be reborn as a new self the "Personal Revolution" (自分革命, "Jibun Kakumei"). He was driven by this impulse several times before aiming to be a skateboarder.

The first "Personal Revolution" occurred in 5th grade. Arawi, who wasn't naturally gifted at studying, usually scored below average on Kanji tests. But one day, he became fixated on the idea that if his academically inept self were to suddenly score a perfect 100, his yesterday's self would be completely astonished.

This ambition to produce a result his past self could never have imagined drove him to study for a test for the first time in his life. He pushed himself with the single-minded thought, "If I do this, my yesterday's self will be so surprised."

Ultimately, his test score fell just short of a perfect mark, causing him to shed tears of frustration. However, the goal of "surprising my former self through my own power" was fully achieved [10].

> ***The moment of "Personal Revolution" happens to me. The start of it was an elementary school Kanji test. Since I didn't particularly study, my test scores were naturally poor. But one day, a bolt of lightning struck my brain: "Wouldn't it be amazing if I scored 100 on the next test?" The next moment, I'd take action toward that 100. That's how it works. In the end, that was about the only test I scored well on; I quickly reverted to my usual mediocre scores. [...] Thinking about it now, this might be a phenomenon that occurs when you get tired of your current self and your desire for transformation becomes strong. The true nature of the "Personal Revolution" might be a movement to fully affirm the combination of the desire for transformation and a fickle nature. The nuance is like "Strike while the iron is hot," with an added push. Maybe?*** [From Helvetica Standard note, "The Connection of Things and Personal Revolution," February 22, 2022]

Arawi was naturally athletic; the karate club he started in high school saw him become skilled enough to be selected as a prefectural reinforced athlete. Similarly, with skateboarding—his "Personal Revolution"—he mastered one trick after another despite starting as a complete beginner. Had he continued without incident, he might have found success as a known skateboarder.

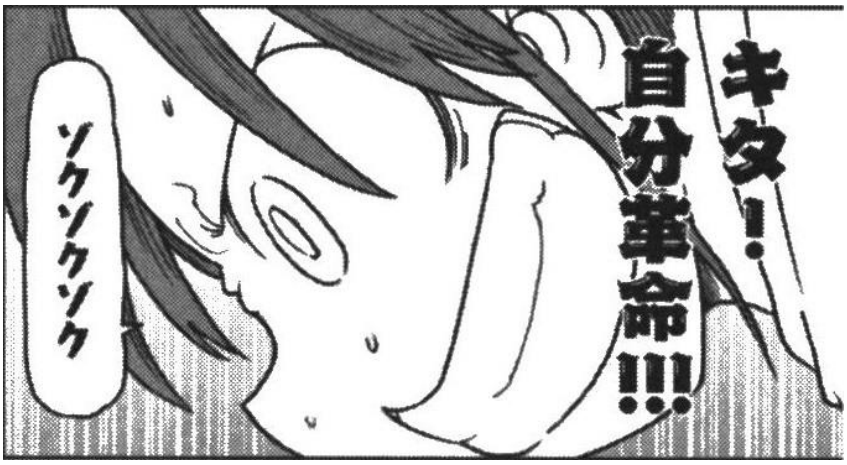
However, Arawi's athletic career was abruptly cut short. One day, while attempting a "flip" (a trick where the board spins 360 degrees in the air), he severely injured his ankle, tearing a ligament.

This injury forced him to abandon the path of a skateboarder. This event occurred around 2001–2002, when he was about 23 to 24 years old.

Yet, his resolve to "surprise my former self" left him no time for despair. The phrase "Next plan rather than discouragement" (落胆するより次の策) often appears in Arawi's manga, and true to those words, he took the next proactive step [11].

The job he found after skateboarding was in manga phototypesetting. Arawi, who had never considered desk work, was drawn to the job precisely because of that. It was another experience of finding an unexperienced version of himself by venturing into the unknown.

And, as an extension of plunging into this new world, he set his sights on his current profession. In 2002, he finally began to dream of becoming a professional manga artist.


キタ！
自分革命!!!
ソクソクソク

From *CITY*Volume 12, page 12: The term "自分革命" (Personal Revolution) is used in the work.

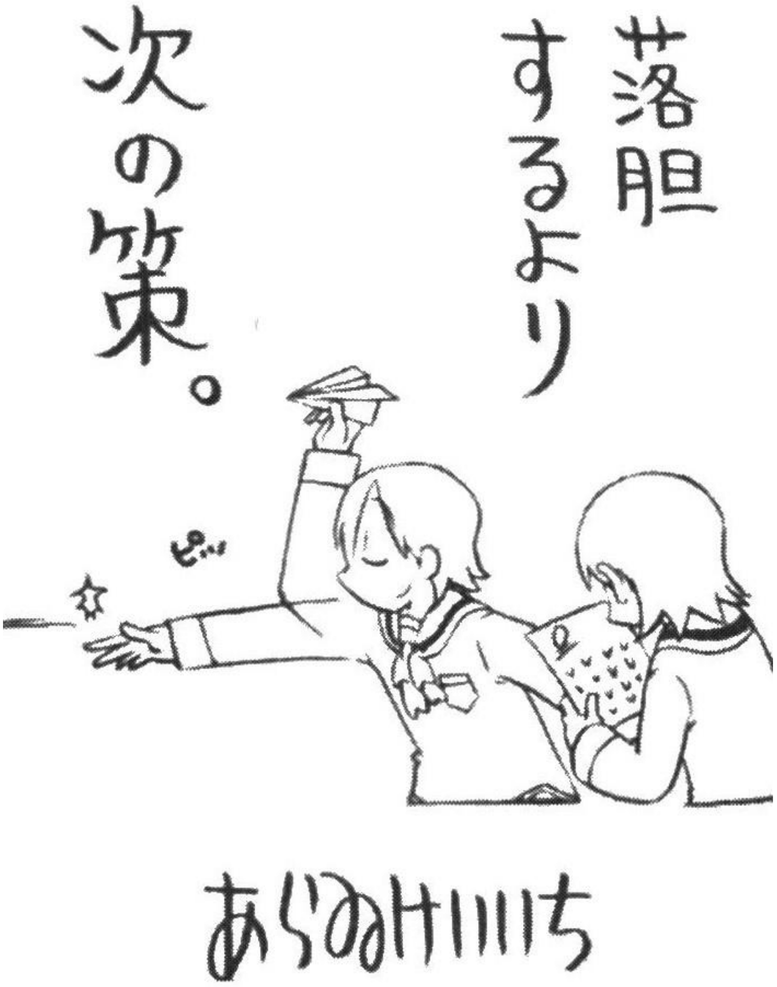

落胆するより
次の策。
ピッ
あらゐけいいち

Illustration for the Tsutaya bookstore purchase bonus of *Nichijou* Volume 10.

> ***Besides that (the "bead-chain" process of expanding hobbies by following things related to one's favorite works), there is also the urge to suddenly jump into a world completely unrelated to anything else. When I moved to Tokyo, I started skateboarding because "I had never done it before," and when I tore a ligament and couldn't do it anymore, I moved on to phototypesetting work for manga (laughs). Going to those unknown places makes me feel like I've become a new me, because there is an unexplored self waiting beyond that point. Becoming a manga artist is definitely part of that flow. Furthermore, manga is still quite new [to me], and I feel like I can do a lot of interesting things with it.*** [From "Young Artists Ask 'The Secret of Manga!'" on the *Jump SQ.* official website]

Arawi held many dreams since high school, but the dream of becoming a manga artist was always off the table. This was because, although not mentioned previously, he had tried to write manga many times during his student years but always failed, realizing he was utterly incapable of becoming one.

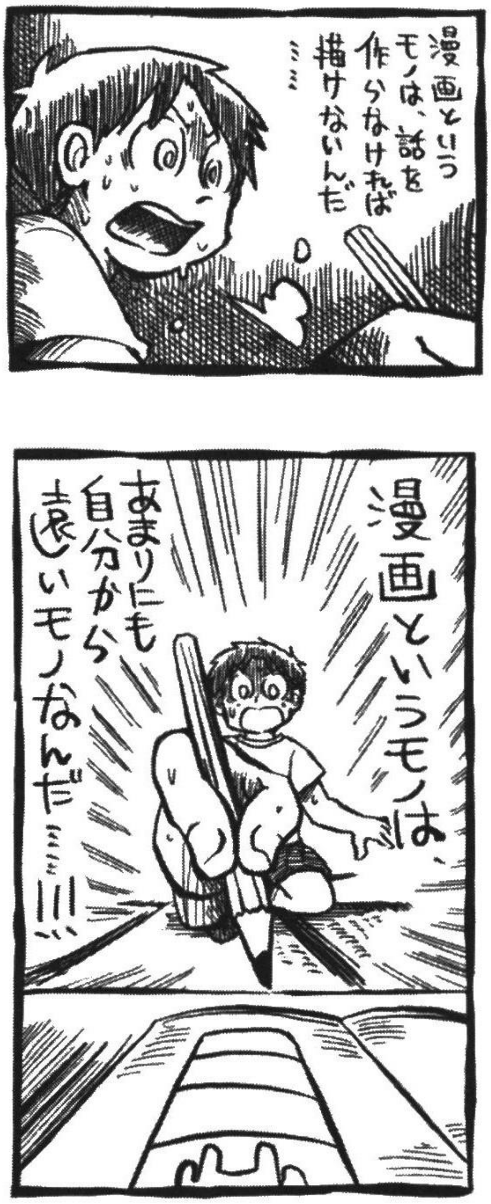
The first setback occurred in the 5th grade. Arawi, who enjoyed drawing, decided one day that he wanted to create a manga, but he had no idea how. He tentatively drew a four-panel frame and put the Zaku from *SD Gundam* in the first panel, but then his hand stopped. The despairing realization that "the thing called manga is too far removed from me" was deeply etched into his heart.

Next, a class newspaper he created in junior high further damaged his confidence. Assigned to the manga section of the paper, Arawi again attempted to draw a 4-koma (four-panel) manga but couldn't successfully translate the images in his head. Though he managed to complete the work somehow, he gave up, thinking, "Manga is impossible" [12].

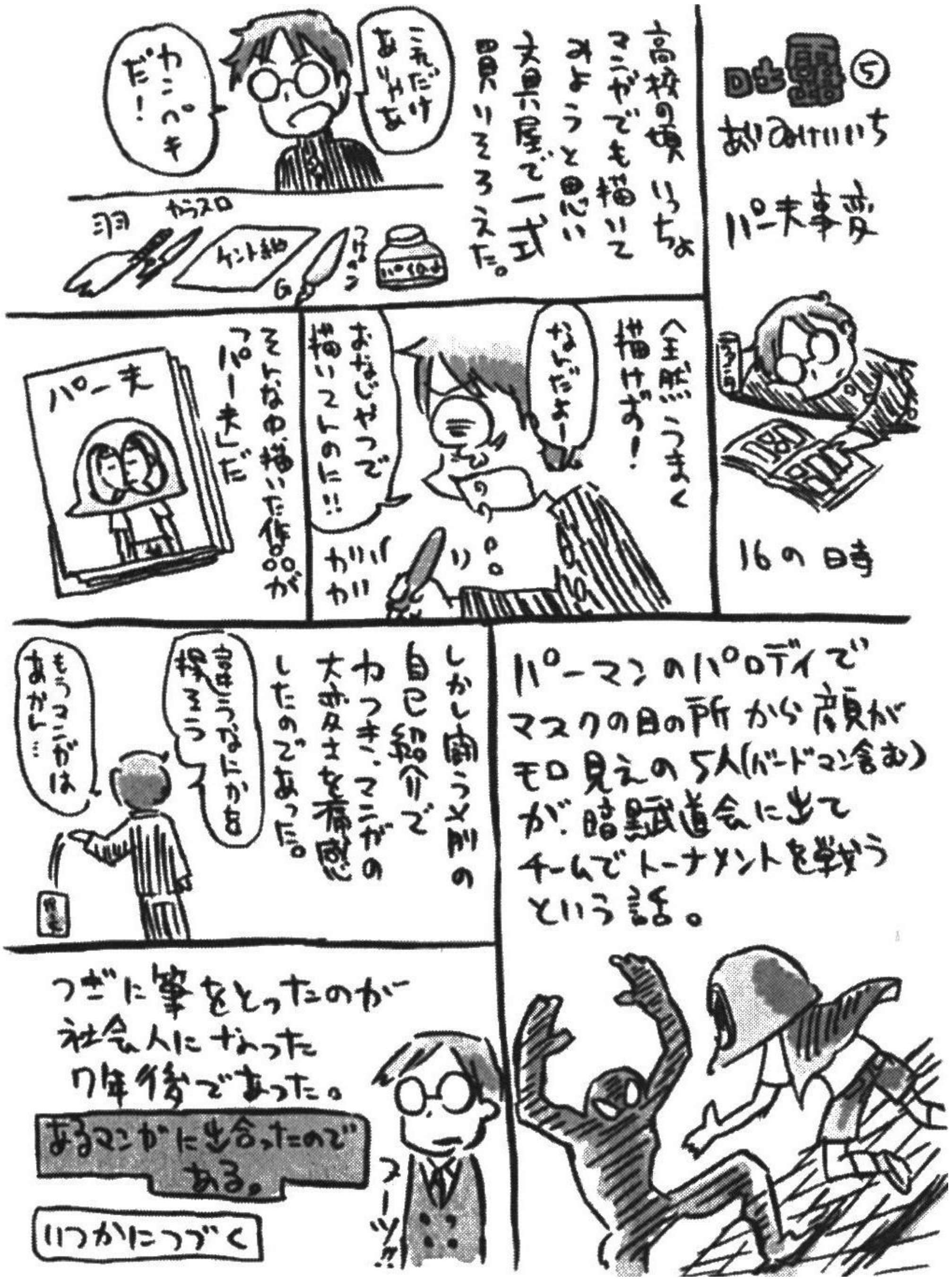
Furthermore, in his second year of high school, when he attempted to draw a *Perman* parody manga called "Pa-o" (パー夫), he again became discouraged and stopped midway through [13].

Arawi was intimately familiar with the feeling of powerlessness that he could not become a manga artist. Conversely, choosing to walk the path of the manga artist after so many failures was, more than anything else, an action that would shock his yesterday's self. What if he could become the manga artist he had always believed he couldn't be? What if his future self could overcome his past self's conventional wisdom?

When the young man who had abandoned several dreams finally decided to pursue being a manga artist and picked up his pen, his heart was set on an endeavor to initiate the greatest "Personal Revolution" in his life.


漫画というモノは、話を作らなければ描けないんだ……
漫画というモノは、
あまりにも自分から遠いモノなんだ……!!!

From Helvetica Standard note, "Manga Michi 02: Childhood Frustration # 2," July 2, 2021: The note depicts a young Arawi experiencing despair over his inability to draw manga well.


吐露⑤
あらいけいいち
パー夫事変
16の時
高校の頃 いっちょ マンガでも描いて みようと思い 文具屋で一式 買いそろえた。
これだけ ありゃあ
カンペキ だ!
羽
カラスロ
ケント紙
Gペン
つけペン
パイロット
全然うまく 描けずっ!
なんだよー
おなじやつで 描いてんのに!!
カリカリ カリ
り。
そんな中描いた作品が 「パー夫」だ
パー夫
パーマンのパロディで マスクの目の所から顔が モロ見えの5人(バードマン含む)が、暗黒武道会に出て チームでトーナメントを戦うという話。
しかし周う文別の 自己紹介で やつき、マンガの 大変さを痛感 したのであった。
違うなにかを 探そう
もうマンガは あかん…
つぎに筆をとったのが 社会人になった 7年後であった。
あるマンガに出会ったので ある。
いつかにつづく
ズーツ!?

From "Toro #5," a bonus manga included with *CITY* Volume 3. This depicts Arawi's high school attempt and subsequent failure to draw the manga "Pa-o" (パー夫). It then states that seven years later, as an adult, Arawi would encounter "a certain manga"—a point that will be discussed later.

Live According to Yourself

Time jumps to 2013. A decade after dreaming of becoming a comedian, musician, or skateboarder, Arawi—through twists and turns—was successfully working as a professional manga artist, none of the above. He was invited to speak at a lecture commemorating the 140th anniversary of his alma mater, Arako Elementary School [14]. Due to a family connection (a relative was the school's PTA president), he was asked to give a lecture titled "Dream! Challenge!!" (夢！チャレンジ!!) as a graduate who had achieved his dream of becoming a manga artist.

The following summarizes the content of the lecture Arawi gave on the elementary school stage. The talk, aimed at younger students on the theme of future dreams, inevitably became an opportunity to reflect on the first half of his life and his choice of the manga artist path as his greatest "Personal Revolution."

> ***"I have so many things I want to do, I can't keep up!" This feeling has persisted within me, from the past right up to the present.*** [From an interview for this book]

For three years in high school and a total of seven years after graduation, Arawi followed his desires, hopping between various dreams. With an extraordinary amount of curiosity and drive, he simply tried his hand at a wide variety of things.

However, he couldn't decisively choose which path he truly wanted to pursue. He reflected that he had too many things he wanted to do, which left him at a stalemate. That is why, in 2002, after giving up on the path of a skateboarder, he began to seriously aim to be a manga artist—to finally resolve his indecisiveness.

> ***That feeling (the desire to aim for something) is very strong. If I'm going to do something, that's where I start. I had too many things I liked, so I didn't know which one to pursue. This left everything half-finished, and I thought, "This can't go on," which is how I eventually arrived at becoming a manga artist.*** [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]

Becoming a manga artist was an admired position, a job where he could do the drawing he loved, and a profession that allowed for the self-expression he couldn't achieve as a comedian. There was no reason not to aim for it. The only reason he hadn't chosen the path before was the repeated setbacks. But precisely because of those failures, Arawi picked up this dream he had initially given up on. The option of drawing manga was the most appealing choice because he never thought he would aim to be a manga artist again.

> ***Even if it's not a "dream," if it's something you "want to do," you're probably recording it [in your heart]. As you get older while doing those things, the things you truly want to do gradually get pruned away. Please live according to yourself. My debut as a manga artist came just before I turned 30, so it's a valid approach to try various things and accumulate experience in your teens and twenties. ...That's what I said at the lecture*** [From an interview for this book]

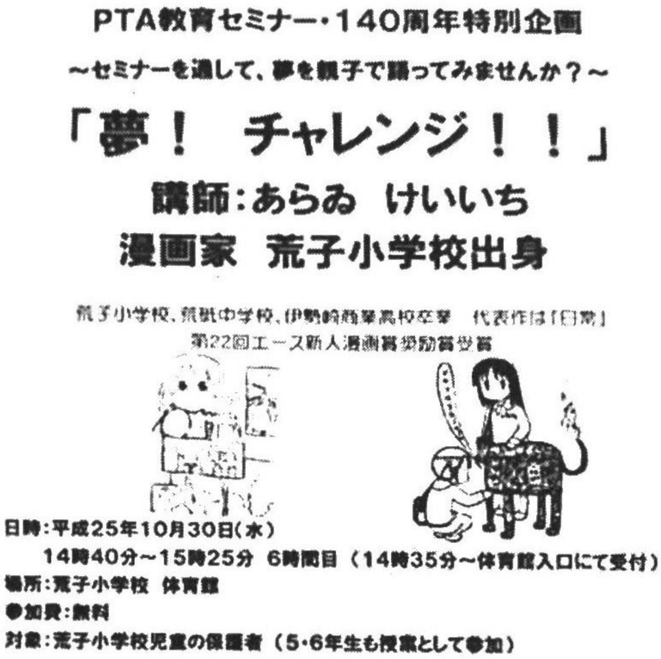
Arawi concluded his lecture with a message based on his own experience: that multiple dreams get pruned away as one ages. As long as one doesn't lose the spirit to pursue something, the accumulated experience will naturally point the way forward. He explained that in his own life, the path of the manga artist naturally emerged while he was simply following his own heart amidst all the things he wanted to do. Therefore, he urged them to "live according to yourself."

This message from the lecture was repeated at the commemorative ceremony for the 100th anniversary of Isesaki Commercial High School in 2019. For this event, Arawi designed the school's mascot character, Ma-kyun (まーきゅん), based on the school crest's Mercury motif, and drew an illustration for the 100th-anniversary clear file.

Furthermore, he sent a congratulatory message to the students, urging them to "take action, even if it's reckless, toward the things you love" [15]. This message must have also been directed at his own youthful self, who was struggling to find his path but pushing forward relentlessly.

The "Personal Revolution" was action sparked by a strong motivation to be reborn as a new self. However, this does not necessarily mean a rejection of his former self. On the contrary, he strongly affirms his past self, who repeatedly took detours but always took some form of action. The days he spent chasing dreams other than manga were not meaningless.

Arawi expressed gratitude that he was able to reach his next dream thanks to his former self. He was confident that by pursuing his ideals and gaining a wealth of experience, he had shaped his own individuality [16].



PTA教育セミナー・140周年特別企画

～セミナーを通して、夢を親子で語ってみませんか？～

「夢！　チャレンジ！！」

講師：あらゐ　けいいち

漫画家　荒子小学校出身

荒子小学校、荒砥中学校、伊勢崎商業高校卒業　代表作は「日常」

第22回エース新人漫画賞奨励賞受賞

日時：平成25年10月30日（水）

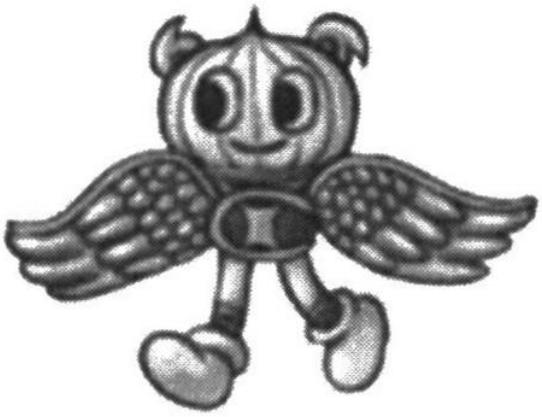
14時40分～15時25分　6時間目（14時35分～体育館入口にて受付）

場所：荒子小学校　体育館

参加費：無料

対象：荒子小学校児童の保護者（5・6年生も授業として参加）

Printed announcement for "PTA Education Seminar 140th Anniversary Special Project," distributed by Maebashi Municipal Arako Elementary School. The illustrations featured here are from Arawi's Twitter posts: the one on the right is from a "kokuchi" (announcement) post on October 4, 2012, and the one on the left is a re-post of his 2006 study, "Manga about just striking a match," posted on November 29, 2012. The print creator likely quoted these from Arawi's Twitter.



School mascot character, Ma-kyun, published in the "School Guide Brochure for New Students, 2020 Academic Year," for Gunma Prefectural Isesaki Commercial High School. This illustration was also used for the school's 100th-anniversary towel.

---

[1]. See an interview for this book.

[2]. On the January 22, 2009, broadcast of Tōru Kirihata's Challenge 70 Minutes on the TBS Radio program *Stream*, Kirihata Tōru mentioned that a former junior of his named Arai was now a manga artist. Although Arawi had not publicly discussed his past as an aspiring comedian before this book interview, Kirihata's remark made Arawi's background known among some fans. Kirihata also wrote the same thing in his blog, Yasei Jidai, on January 22, 2009.

[3]. See an interview for this book.

[4]. Here is a detailed summary of the scene in the film Open House where Arawi appeared: The protagonist, Mitsuwa (played by Eihi Shiina), aspires to be a model but is struggling to succeed. Her expression is dark, and the client who hired her for an advertising photo complains to the cameraman (Moro Moro'oka). The cameraman offers profuse apologies but is inwardly furious. Unable to vent his anger at the client, he directs his frustration at the camera assistant. This assistant, the target of the anger, was played by Arawi.

The ill-tempered cameraman slaps the assistant on the head with a thick file he was holding. Although this is clearly unreasonable behavior, the assistant only apologizes, saying, "I'm sorry!" When the cameraman follows up with the abuse, "Don't you dare look down on me just because it's a cut-out!" (referencing the photography term for isolating a subject from the background), the assistant simply replies with a crisp, "Yes, sir!"

The exchange between the cameraman and Arawi's assistant lasts less than ten seconds and is largely unrelated to the main plot. It serves primarily as an interlude before the appearance of Ogawa (Shigemitsu Ogi), the mysterious man who offers Mitsuwa a chance to model for a magazine. However, Arawi was certainly a part of the narrative as an actor.

[5]. Here is a description of the scene in *La Ruban* where Arawi appeared: The story begins with the disappearance of Kazuya Nakata (Tenpyō Hazama), a young entrepreneur who ran an SM club. The detective in charge of the case (Moro Moro’oka) eventually tracks down Lisa Aoki (Atsuko Ishino) while gathering testimony from the women who worked

at Nakata's club. While Nakata violently abused the women and waiters at his club, he treated Lisa exceptionally, maintaining a purely platonic relationship with her. However, although Lisa loved Nakata, she felt conflicted about being singled out and had an argument with him. This argument incited the waiter, Mitsuru Itō (Masahiro Tabuchi), who already resented Nakata, to murder him.

The film concludes with the recovery of Nakata's body, which had been abandoned in the sea. Arawi appeared here as one of the forensic specialists who arrived at the scene to examine the body. Arawi is also briefly visible in an earlier inserted shot in the film's opening sequence, where police officers and forensic specialists investigate Nakata's body.

[6]. See an interview for this book. Also, the essay "Play and Illusion" in Helvetica Standard note (March 1, 2022) includes a description of Hiroshi: I have a relative two years younger named "Hiroshi," and he was amazing. Hiroshi lived next door to my house but moved to Tokyo around my 3rd or 4th year of elementary school. Whenever he came to Gunma to visit, his transformation was astounding. His drawing skills improved, his gaming skills improved, he became knowledgeable about machines, he could make music, and more than anything, his casual conversation was incredibly interesting. (Incidentally, Hiroshi also appears as a Tokyo-based relative in the essay "Afterword" distributed at the *Nichijou* Volume 2 release signing event, later re-published in *Nichijou* Volume X. This "Afterword" states that Hiroshi is the same age as Arawi, but the information that he is two years younger appears to be accurate.)

[7]. The part-time job cleaning windows on buildings is also discussed in the essay "Croquette Sandwich" (コロッケパン), included in the serialized version of *Helvetica Standard*. Although "Korokke Pan" is introduced as an episode from when Arawi was 18, Arawi was working at a karaoke bar when he first moved to Tokyo, so this event is thought to have actually occurred around age 20–21.

[8]. A tweet on November 14, 2009, mentions that Arawi lived in the Kōenji/Asagaya area for a total of eight years. Since Arawi stated in an interview for this book that he moved to Asagaya in late 2003 and then to Hachiōji in 2006, it is inferred that he first moved to Kōenji in 1999.

[9]. See the essay manga *Sennen Ōkoku* in *Continue* Volume 59.

[10]. See the essay manga "Toro #6." This manga also recounts the mindset behind attempting a "Personal Revolution" by studying for the elementary school Kanji test.

[11]. In a tweet dated March 20, 2012, Arawi spilled a drink on a manuscript he was working on and, to encourage himself to redraw it, tweeted the phrase, "Next plan rather than discouragement."

[12]. See *Monthly Newtype*, "Submission and Creation #2," April 2019 issue.

[13]. The parody manga "Pa-o" was conceived as the story of a boy wearing a Perman-like helmet who fights his way through the "Ankoku Budōkai" (Dark Martial Arts Tournament). This martial arts tournament was likely inspired by manga serialized in Shōnen Jump from the 1980s onward, as tournament-style fighting battles were a staple of the magazine's serialized manga at the time. Arawi likely referenced the "Tenkaichi Budōkai" (天下一武道会) in *Dragon Ball* or "Ankoku Bujutsukai" (暗黒武術会) in *YuYu Hakusho* when naming his tournament the "Ankoku Budōkai" (暗黒武道会).

[14]. The essay manga "65 Dairy: Lecture at School" in *Helvetica Standard Italic* reflects on the events that took place after this lecture.

[15]. See an interview for this book.

[16]. In an interview for this book, Arawi cited Bob Dylan's "Forever Young" (1974) as one of the image songs for *Nichijou*. The lyrics, which sing about being "forever young" or "forever new," likely resonated with the mindset of the young Arawi, who pursued many challenges under the banner of "Personal Revolution."

Incidentally, immediately after the terrestrial broadcast of the final episode of the anime *Nichijou* Episode 26 (September 25, 2011), Arawi posted a link to the audio of "Forever Young" on Twitter. Although not explicitly stated, Arawi was likely ruminating on the music that served as an image song for *Nichijou*.

Arawi mentioned countless image songs for *Nichijou*. (Refer to Note 4 in "Primary Experience #1" and Note 15 in "So Many Things I Want to Do #2"). Separately, in "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs," he also mentioned Kirinji's "Gogatsu-byō" (五月病, "May Sickness") (1998).

The Way of Manga #1: Medical Asahi Illustration Placement (2001–2004)

First Commercial Illustrations

We've traced Arawi's path after moving to Tokyo, through various twists and turns, until he finally decided to become a manga artist. Given that he graduated high school in 1996 and took up the pen again in 2002, it took him about seven years to determine his desired path.

It's important to note, however, that even though he had abandoned the idea of being a manga artist in his student days, he hadn't completely stopped drawing. He drew illustrations on postcards for magazine submissions in high school and continued to draw as a hobby afterward.

Below, we'll follow the history of his illustration work, which became another catalyst for him to aim for a career in manga. Besides the "Personal Revolution" impulse, his decision to become a manga artist was influenced by the steady illustration work he continued and the various people he met through his art.

Around 1998–1999, after quitting his comedian and music activities, Arawi purchased a desktop computer. The internet was a stimulating new world, and he quickly made a habit of visiting text and illustration websites. He also enjoyed popular services at the time, such as the chat service SAPARi and the electronic pet-raising service PostPet [1].

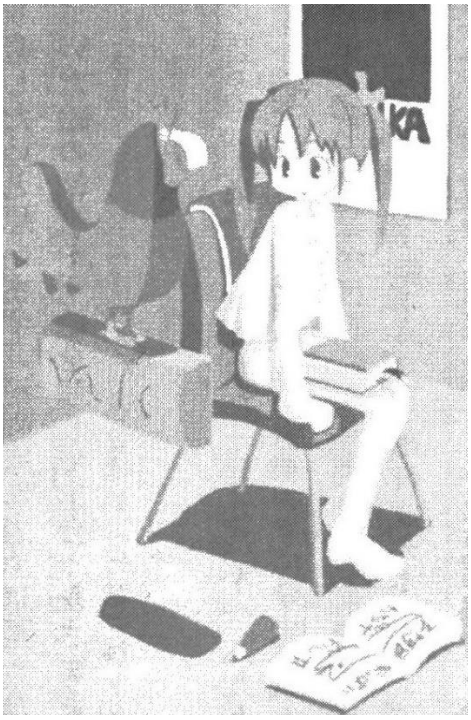


Illustration "News" published on Himarayairuka in the first half of 2003. Since the VAIO logo is visible on the stand where the chicken is resting its leg, it is assumed that the computer Arawi was using at the time was a VAIO.

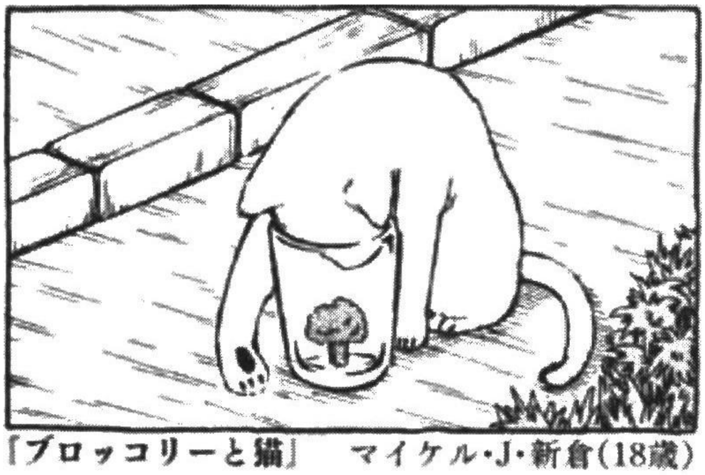
The computer was primarily a plaything for Arawi, and he didn't use it for creative activities until he launched his own website later on. However, one day while immersed in the online world, a simple curiosity pointed him toward an unexpected path: he decided to look up the name of an acquaintance on a search engine, and this led to a job in illustration.

> ***I suddenly wondered about the whereabouts of an old acquaintance, so I searched for every name I could think of on a search engine. I found that the admin of a certain movie site was using the same name as a friend from the karate club, and the site had a familiar photo of his face. I also remembered that he used to submit a lot to movie magazines under the pen name "Michael J. Kazuhiko." When I sent him an email, it turned out he was involved with a magazine called Medical Asahi. When I told him I had quit comedy and wanted to pursue illustration, a job for magazine insert cuts came up.*** [From an interview for this book]

Arawi had been reunited with a high school karate club friend ("Michael J. Kazuhiko") online. Considering that in the early 2000s, the internet penetration rate was less than half of all households, let alone the existence of social media, this was a rare, even miraculous reunion.

Even more fatefully, his friend was involved in publishing the comprehensive medical magazine *Medical Asahi* and was looking for an illustrator for the cuts. Arawi was offered a job drawing illustrations for the monthly magazine. His first step as a professional illustrator began through a connection from his high school days.

Starting with the December 2001 issue of *Medical Asahi*, Arawi was put in charge of illustrations for the column "Hasegawa Eiichi no Chiebukuro" (長谷川榮一の知恵袋, "Dr. Eiichi Hasegawa's Wisdom Bag"). By this time, he was also aiming to be a professional skateboarder, meaning he was leading a double life with one foot in the world outside and one in the world inside his home.


「ブロッコリーと猫」
マイケル・J・新倉（18歳）

From *CITY* Volume 1, page 134: The pen name of his friend, "Michael J. Kazuhiko," was parodied approximately 16 years later as the character Niikura's pen name, "Michael J. Niikura."

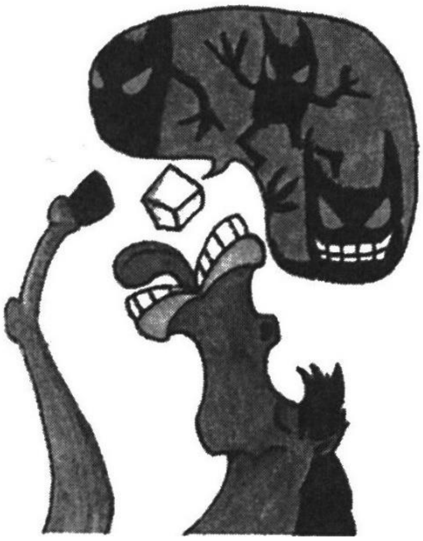


Illustration published in *Medical Asahi*, December 2001 issue, for "Hasegawa Eiichi no Chiebukuro 1: Tansokin (Anthrax)." This was Arawi's first commercial illustration.

> ***I clearly remember drawing this horse illustration. It was the first time in my life I tried an airbrush with Copic markers—on the background of the anthrax illustration. But looking back at it now, the airbrush didn't really serve a purpose. I probably could have just used a solid fill without any unevenness.*** [From an interview for this book]

What did Arawi gain from this illustration serialization experience? Medical Asahi contained mostly specialized medical content, and Arawi admits he couldn't understand much beyond the column he illustrated [2]. The influence from Medical Asahi itself may not have been strong.

Rather, it was the frustration he felt through this serialization that stimulated his creative urge. The insertion cuts came with many restrictions, and the editor often specified the composition in detail, making it impossible for him to express what he truly wanted [3]. While he was initially thrilled to have an art job, he gradually began to feel constrained.

Although he didn't abandon the serialization, his inner desire to do what he truly wanted grew stronger. The experience of having to compromise helped him resolve to draw his own manga.

> ***I might have taken the illustration job simply because I admired the idea of an art job. It was like "being in love with love," so to speak. When I eventually came to my senses, I decided that if I really wanted to pursue art, I should draw what I want to draw—and that was one of the reasons I started drawing manga and illustrations.*** [From an interview for this book]

The illustration serialization continued with almost no breaks from 2002 to 2003. However, the frequency of his illustrations decreased starting in 2004. This was likely because he wanted to focus seriously on his own creative work.

He ultimately stepped down from writing the illustrations after the September 2004 issue of *Medical Asahi* [4]. This work for the magazine helped him reaffirm his deep-seated desire to create something entirely his own.

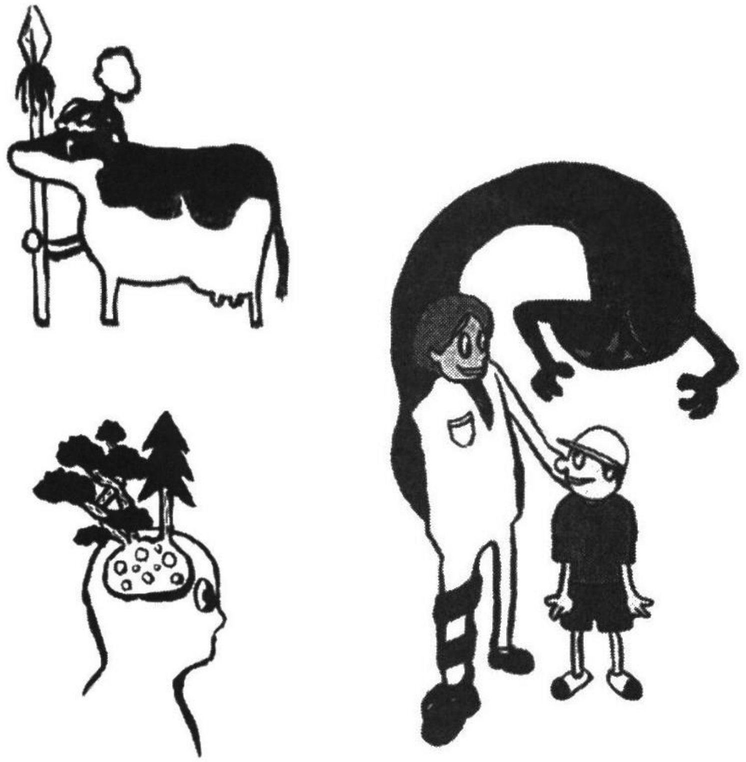
Information for Illustrations in Medical Asahi's "Dr. Eiichi Hasegawa's Wisdom Bag"

The illustrations were published in the column "Hasegawa Eiichi no Chiebukuro" in *Medical Asahi* from the December 2001 issue to the November 2003 issue, and in the January, March, April, May, July, and September 2004 issues.

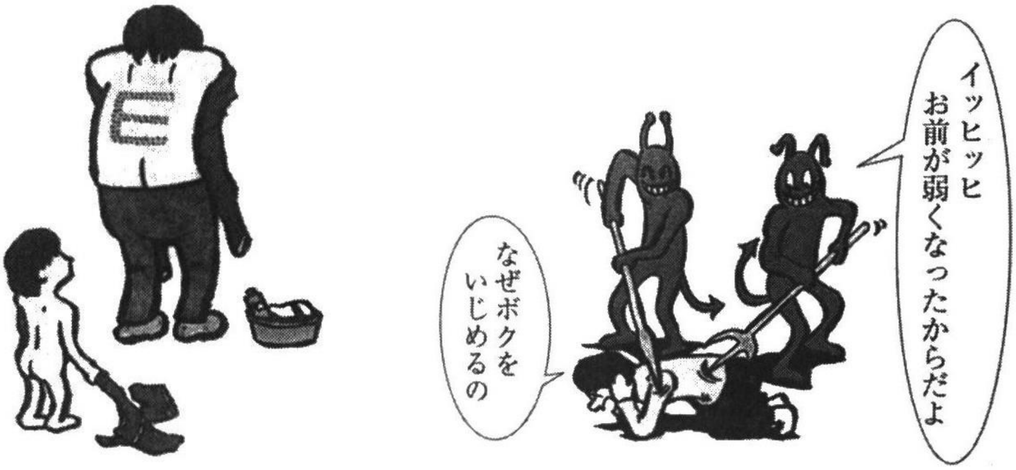
List of Column Titles with Arawi's Illustrations

- "1. Anthrax" (炭疽菌) (December 2001 issue)
- "2. Mad Cow Disease " (狂牛病) (January 2002 issue)
- "3. Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease" (ヤコブ症) (February 2002 issue)
- "4. Hay Fever" (花粉症) (March 2002 issue)
- "5. Opportunistic Infection" (日和見感染) (April 2002 issue)
- "6. Stress" (ストレス) (May 2002 issue)
- "7. Aluminum" (アルミニウム) (June 2002 issue)
- "8. Botulinum Toxin" (ボツリヌス毒) (August 2002 issue)
- "9. Athlete's Foot" (水虫) (July 2002 issue)
- "10. Food Poisoning" (食中毒) (September 2002 issue)
- "11. Liver " (肝臓) (October 2002 issue)
- "12. Electromagnetic Waves" (電磁波) (November 2002 issue)
- "13. Nitroglycerin" (ニトログリセリン) (December 2002 issue)
- "14. Alcohol" (アルコール) (January 2003 issue)
- "15. Influenza" (インフルエンザ) (February 2003 issue)
- "16. Smallpox" (天然痘) (March 2003 issue)
- "17. Aldehyde" (アルデヒド) (April 2003 issue)
- "18. SARS" (May 2003 issue)
- "19. Decompression Sickness" (潜水病) (June 2003 issue)
- "20. Altitude Sickness" (高山病) (July 2003 issue)
- "21. Plutonium" (プルトニウム) (August 2003 issue)
- "22. West Nile Fever" (西ナイル熱) (September 2003 issue)
- "23. Arsenic" (ヒ素) (October 2003 issue)
- "24. X-Ray" (レントゲン) (November 2003 issue)
- "26. Lifespan" (寿命) (January 2004 issue)
- "28. Chondroitin Sulfate" (コンドロイチン硫酸) (March 2004 issue)

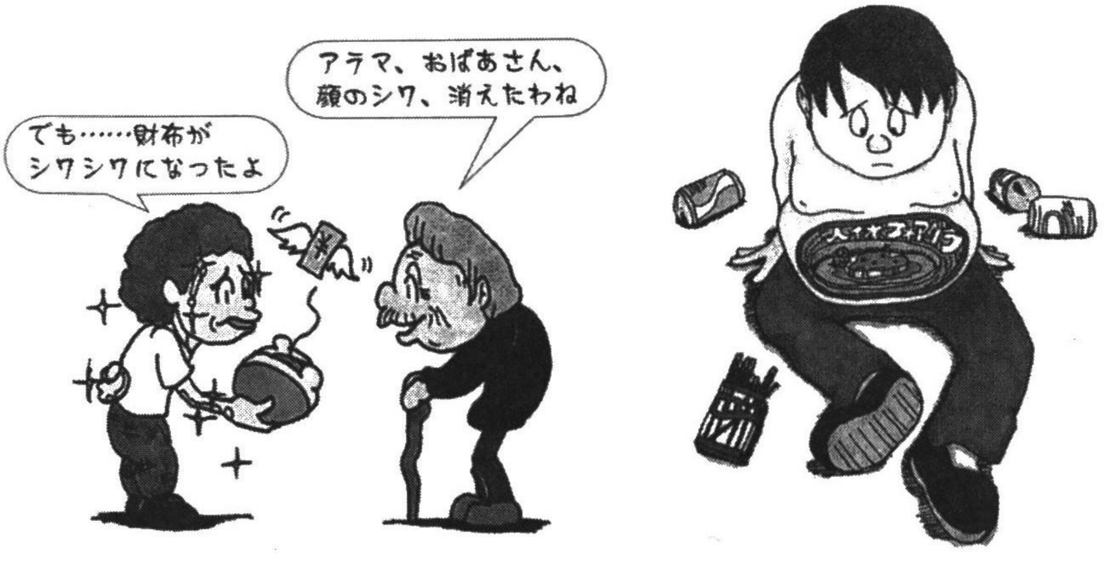
- "29. MRI" (April 2004 issue)
- "30. Infarction" (梗塞) (May 2004 issue)
- "32. Defibrillation" (除細動) (July 2004 issue)
- "34. Vitamin B1" (September 2004 issue)



Illustrations for "2. Mad Cow Disease" (Left) and "3. Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease" (Right).

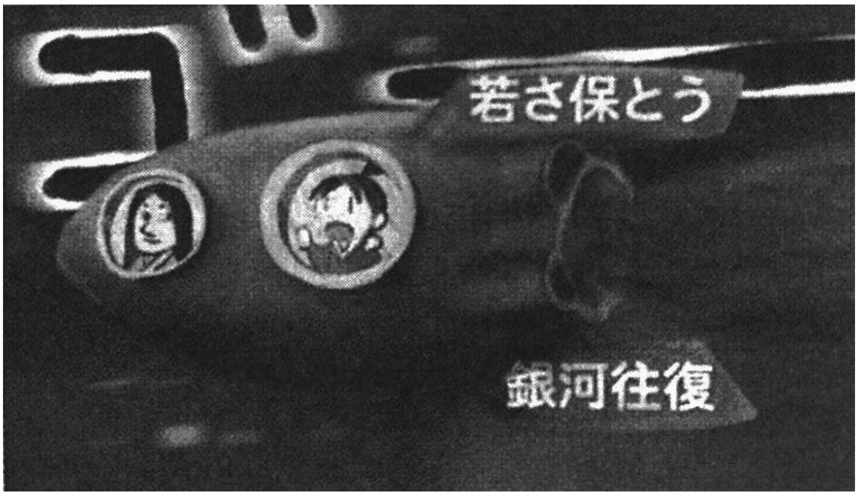

イッヒッヒ
お前が弱くなったからだよ
なぜボクを
いじめるの

Illustrations for "4. Hay Fever" (Left) and "5. Opportunistic Infection" (Right).


アラマ、おばあさん、
顔のシワ、消えたわね
でも……財布が
シワシワになったよ

Illustrations for "9. Athlete's Foot " (Left) and "11. Liver" (Right).

Illustration for "10. Food Poisoning."


ゴッ
若さ保とう
銀河往復

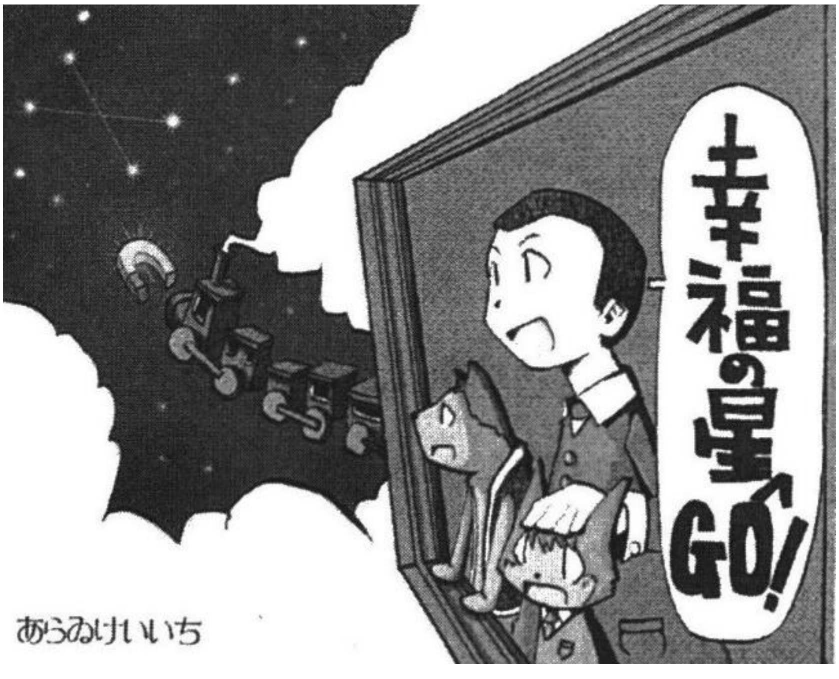
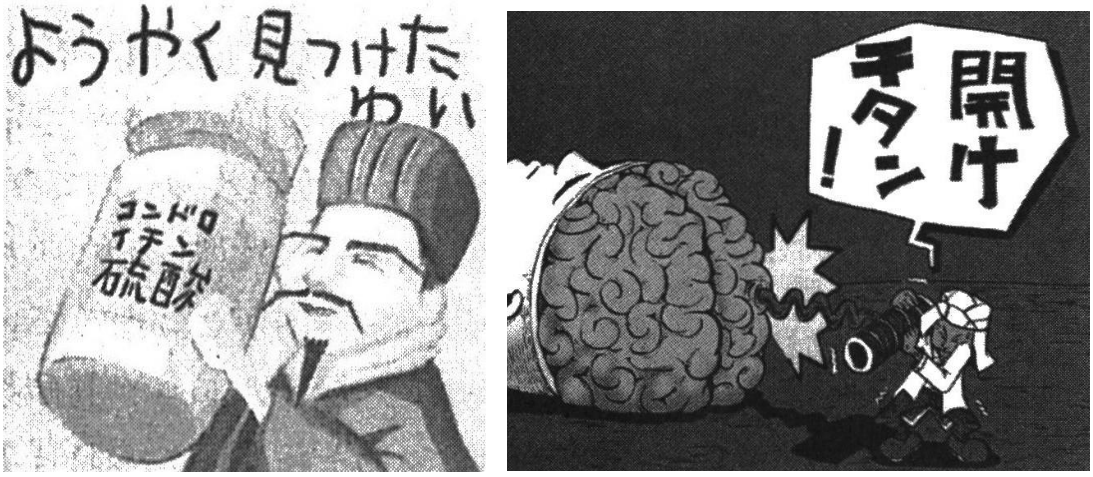
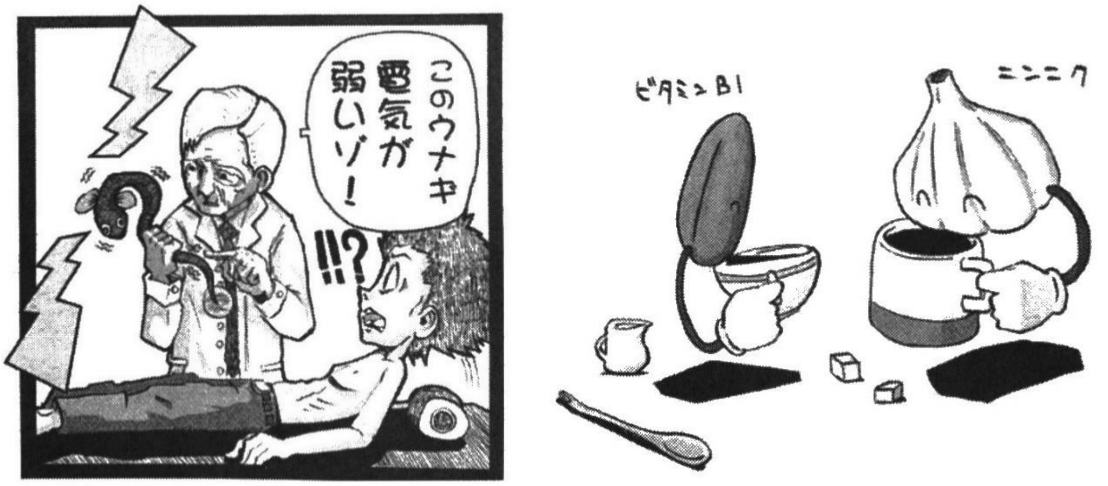

幸福の星へGO!
あらみけいいち

Illustration for "26. Lifespan" (Top) and "29. MRI" (Bottom).


ようやく見つけたわい
コンドロイチン硫酸
開け
チタン！

Illustrations for "28. Chondroitin Sulfate" (Left) and "30. Infarction" (Right).


このウナギ電気が弱いゾ！
!!?
ビタミンB1
ニンニク

Illustrations for "32. Defibrillation" (Left) and "34. Vitamin B1" (Right).

---

[1]. See an interview for this book.

[2]. A comment from Arawi was posted on the "Hinoinaka Oekaki BBS" (日乃田舎御絵描きBBS, "Hinonaka Drawing BBS") on August 4, 2003: *"Medical Asahi. Since it's a magazine perfectly aimed at doctors, it's hard to get. Even looking at the content of the magazine, I barely understand anything. I only ever look at the column I draw for... Is that okay for me to do? "* ("Hinoinaka" was a personal website operated by an acquaintance of Arawi at the time, handle name 紙一 [Kami-ichi].)

[3]. See "Arai-ryū Sumi-e" (新井流墨絵, "Arai-style Ink Painting"), February 4, 2002: *"The manuscript from Asahi arrived. A rough sketch arrived with it. Since the start of the serialization, I've been handed something like a hastily drawn illustration (or manga?) that I've entirely ignored, drawing my own interpretation based on the manuscript. But the rough sketch that arrived this time was a solid single illustration, finished to a level where I thought, "Oh, I see." Are you telling me to copy something so detailed, Asahi-san? I'm going to draw something totally different!!!...Though, if it gets rejected, I'll draw that one. (Business is business.)"*

[4]. It is confirmed that Arawi's illustrations stopped being published starting with the October 2004 issue, and he was completely replaced as the illustrator in the April 2005 issue when a different artist took over the duty.

The Way of Manga #2: Website Launch and Shinkōsha Employment (2000–2002)

Launch of "Arai-ryū Sumi-e"

While drawing illustrations for *Medical Asahi*, Arawi also began showcasing his own art on the internet. Let's look at the artistic styles he was focused on during this period and the websites that served as his creative base.

In the early 2000s, one common way to publish art on the internet was to host it on a personal website. Arawi followed this trend and launched a website to share his creative works.

His first site was titled "How Do You Smoke," launched in the second half of 2000. However, he didn't actually upload any art during this phase. He began consistently publishing creative works on his subsequent site, "Arai-ryū Sumi-e" (新井流墨絵, "Arai-style Ink Painting"), which he launched in the first half of 2001, focusing primarily on sumi-e (ink wash painting) [1].

At the time, Arawi's handle name was "Cork" (コルク) on How Do You Smoke and "Arai Keiichi" (あらいけいいち) on Arai-ryū Sumi-e. He started using his current name (in its final form) from July 2003.

> ***I thought about publishing illustrations and decided to try creating a personal website. The site name was "How Do You Smoke." However, that page never got around to hosting illustrations and remained just a website. The next one I made was "Arai-ryū Sumi-e." Here, I published ink wash painting works that I was interested in at the time. I also experimented with creating Flash animations, which were popular back then. I created a ink wash painting gallery using Flash software, exhibited it for a limited time, and explored new forms of expression.*** [From an interview for this book]

A striking characteristic of his sumi-e during this period is how vastly different the style was from his current work.

Since his school days, Arawi had been drawn to highly deformed characters and the cute, young boys and girls in manga and anime. After moving to Tokyo, however, he distanced himself from the types of work he once loved. Instead, he favored the artistic and highly immersive styles of mangaka like Taiyō Matsumoto and Santa Inoue [2].

As a result, his ink wash painting looked nothing like the art style he favored in his school days. It is noteworthy that Arawi's current style is not a direct continuation of his student-era brushwork, but rather one that underwent a break. It's plausible that passing through this completely different style helped to forge his unique current individuality.

> ***My old drawings were based on photographs. I remember using the composition of a photograph as a reference and drawing a temple using black ink, light ink, and red all mixed together. I think the title was "Otherworld"*** [3]. [From an interview for this book]

In addition to ink wash painting, Arawi also created works in styles different from his current one, such as when he was commissioned by a musician acquaintance to design rock musician flyers. For this, he collaged album covers of UK punk bands that were popular in the 1970s, creating a "punkish, skull"-themed illustration.

His dedication to exploring how to achieve originality by using established album covers as source material demonstrates his commitment to searching for his own unique artistic voice. Coincidentally, his "Arai-ryū Sumi-e" site at the time described his ink wash painting as being created "self-taught," "without using traditional techniques," and drawn in a "unique style." Although the visual style was different, the desire to draw his own kind of illustration remained unchanged [4].

> ***Around the time I started ink wash painting, there was a period when I was asked to design a flyer for a rock band. This was when my drawing style was completely different from what it is now. It was a punkish, skull-themed kind of thing.*** [From Himarayairuka, "A Certain Report," (ある報告) July 30, 2003]

> ***An acquaintance asked me to draw a flyer. It was for a musician named YAS, but when I search now, only different people show up. At that time, I was experimenting, collaging and imitating UK punk boom album covers, trying to figure out how far I could push it before it became truly original.*** [From an interview for this book]

Returning to a Cute Art Style

During the period when Arawi was creating ink wash painting and musician flyers, his brushwork differed significantly from a typical manga style. The highly deformed characters and cute art he had once favored seemed a thing of the distant past [5].

However, in 2002, his artistic approach underwent a radical change. A reunion with the work of a certain manga artist led him to completely shift his direction and return to a cute art style that connects directly to his current work.

The manga, which was hinted at in the essay manga "Toro #5," was Kiyohiko Azuma's *Azumanga Daioh*.

> ***The peak of my otaku-leaning hobbies was during high school. I watched Tenchi Muyo! and read Dengeki PC Engine. At that time, it was Kiyohiko Azuma-san who drew the bonus manga included with the Tenchi Muyo! OVAs.***
>
> ***Then, one day while I was practicing skateboarding, I accidentally saw Azuma-san's manga in a bookstore. Nostalgic for my high school days, I picked up his new manga, Azumanga Daioh. As a result, my website transformed from a ink wash painting website into an Azumanga Daioh fan site.*** [From an interview for this book]

One of the anime Arawi liked in high school was *Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-Ohki.* The OVA, released by Pioneer LDC, included a bonus manga by Kiyohiko Azuma. Azuma contributed similar manga to other OVA works [6], and in 1998, a compiled volume of these bonus manga, *Azumanga*, was released. The new manga that began serialization in *Monthly Comic Dengeki Daioh* after that was *Azumanga Daioh*.

Remembering his student days, Arawi was instantly captivated when he picked up *Azumanga Daioh*. This encounter became the turning point, leading him to once again favor anime and manga featuring cute girls.

He soon changed his handle name back to Cork and began posting Azumanga Daioh fan art on his website. On March 14, 2002, he renamed "Arai-ryū Sumi-e" to "Azumanga Nantoka" (あずまんがナントカ, "Azumanga Something"), officially beginning its life as an *Azumanga Daioh* fan site. The illustrations he published on this site became the crucial factor that steered his manga style toward its current direction.

The launch of Azumanga Nantoka coincided with the conclusion of the *Azumanga Daioh* serialization. However, as the manga finished, the anime version began airing in April, keeping the work's popularity strong. Online, the fandom was active with fans interacting and sharing fan art, and Arawi was able to connect with many of them.

The young man who once couldn't share his anime hobby with those around him and felt lonely when his favorite works weren't understood was now connecting with countless other anime enthusiasts through the internet. While he was captivated by the cute girls Azuma drew, a major reason for his enthusiasm was the ability to share the passion with many others—a feeling he couldn't share during his student days.

Arawi became so engrossed in interacting with fellow fans of the same work that his time spent on the computer increased daily. To what extent was he immersed? He spent so much time browsing the fan sites that he quit his part-time job.

> ***The phenomenon of getting completely absorbed in the PC and being late for work often.***
> ***When you write on a bulletin board yourself, you can't help but check for replies, right?***
> ***And you visit that site many times a day. [...]***
> ***Writing on several bulletin boards and making the rounds.***
> ***Chatting with close friends and losing all track of time.***
> ***In a way, this might be the best part of the internet.***
> ***However, this is also the reason I had to change jobs (cries)***
> [From Azumanga Nantoka, August 10, 2002]

At the time, Arawi was making a living soldering semiconductor parts—a job he could do while sitting due to the ligament injury from his skateboarding accident. However, the work was tedious, and he was already planning to change jobs soon.

While he was intending to quit anyway, the joyful experience of getting "completely absorbed" in the internet undoubtedly acted as the catalyst for his job change. For better or worse, the encounter with *Azumanga Daioh* and the interactions with close friends were such major experiences that they disrupted his life.

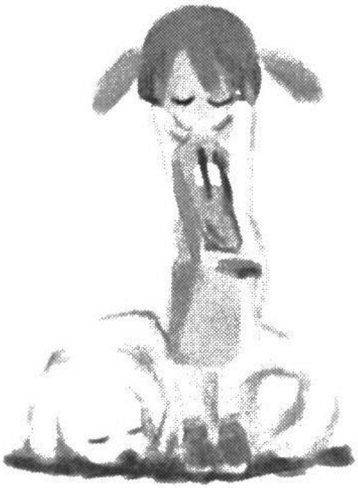


Illustration of Chiyo Mihama and her dog Tadakichi from *Azumanga Daioh*. Published on Himarayairuka in the first half of 2003.

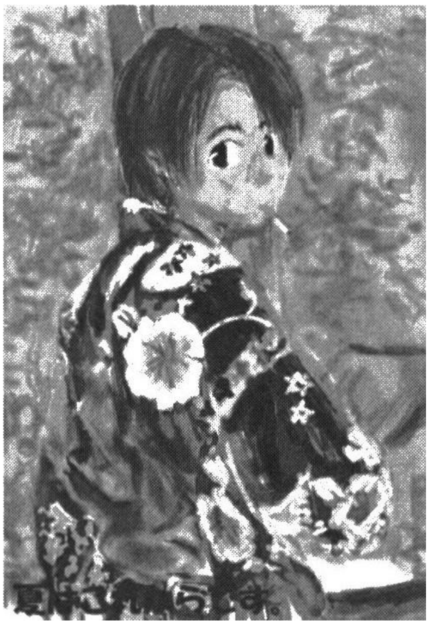


illustration sent to a friend (handle name: a-kazuo) on July 23, 2002. This is an original illustration of a female character, not fan art.

This Praise Is Not Real "Praise"

Shocked by *Azumanga Daioh*, Arawi began frequenting online fan sites and gained several comrades. One person he connected with at this time was the future manga artist Daioki (大沖).

Seven years Arawi's junior, Daioki was a high school student in 2002 but had already been following *Azumanga Daioh* and submitting a large volume of fan art. Arawi's post on Daioki's website bulletin board initiated their friendship, which continues to this day [7]. Another manga artist/illustrator he met around the same time was Takuya Mitomi [8].

> ***(Comment when Daioki's manga Harumination was picked up for commercial serialization in 2008) Oki-san(Daioki)'s manga is going to be serialized. Since I've known him since he was in high school, it's quite moving. It's a manga called Harumine-shon in the magazine Kirara Charat. Check it out if you're curious. It's an illumination. Seriously, it's been a weird and long relationship. I'm thinking of inviting him out for a drink and having him treat me.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "Before Himarayairuka" (ヒマラヤイルカよりもっと前), January 17, 2008]

The days of watching the *Azumanga Daioh* anime and spending time with friends were deeply fulfilling. Drawing illustrations on the drawing bulletin boards installed on other fans' sites was also a blissful moment. The community praised his illustrations and welcomed his presence on the boards.

He was able to connect with like-minded people, and they affirmed both his art and his existence. There was no place more comfortable than the *Azumanga Daioh* fan community. Had it not been for the persistent desire to create his own unique art, Arawi would likely have remained in this space forever.

However, Arawi's nature meant that the urge to create original works never faded.

> ***The existence of the fan site was huge for me. The people I met there would praise me every time I posted an illustration. I was completely ecstatic. But then, one day, I realized something. The people who were praising me were praising everyone in the community in the same way. That's when I started to think, "Is this praise even real praise?"*** [From an interview for this book]

Arawi reasoned: Many others are posting *Azumanga Daioh* fan art, and they are all being praised in a similar fashion. If that's the case, is this praise directed at me even genuine?

With this thought, Arawi conceived of an illustration that would not rely on other people's manga or anime works and unveiled his original creation, "Nantonaku" (ナントナク), in July 2002, after about four months of immersion in the *Azumanga Daioh* fan site life.

> ***That was the heyday of Flash animation, so I always wanted to make a Flash anime myself. The original animation I released was "Nantonaku." It was a story about a little girl who's a beginner tengu and a character named Hako-kun. The girl's name was Nantonaku. She was characterized by her big ribbon.*** [From an interview for this book]

The apprentice tengu girl, Nantonaku, and her box-shaped mascot spirit, Hako-kun, garnered support from the community. Seeing his friends draw fan art of Nantonaku boosted Arawi's confidence [9].

Arawi gradually became engrossed in creating illustrations and Flash animations starring Nantonaku. At the same time, he felt conflicted about prominently featuring original work on a website that was fundamentally an *Azumanga Daioh* fan site.

He ultimately resolved to shut down the current website. On August 14, 2002, Azumanga Nantoka closed its doors after exactly five months of activity.

A month after the closure of Azumanga Nantoka, Arawi launched a new website, Himarayairuka (ヒマラヤイルカ). This site was established from the start with the goal of publishing original illustrations and manga, directly connecting to his activities today.

> ***Five months have quickly passed since I started this website.***
> ***I debuted as an Azumanga site, and it ended up becoming a super-personal website.***
> ***I think it's time to put an end to these five months, which were filled with fun things.***
> [From Azumanga Nantoka, August 8, 2002]

His affection for *Azumanga Daioh* continued even after the fan site's closure, and in later interviews, he stated, "I love Kiyohiko Azuma-san's manga" [10]. When Azuma's new manga, *Yotsuba&!*, began serialization in 2003, Arawi noted that he started subscribing to the host magazine, *Monthly Comic Dengeki Daioh*, solely to read Azuma's work [11].

However, Arawi also stated that once he seriously started aiming to become a professional manga artist, he made an effort to distance himself from Azuma's work, fearing he would be too heavily influenced [12]. Choosing the path of creating original work, even at the cost of losing precious time spent simply enjoying his favorite manga, set him apart from a mere manga fan. This choice became one of the catalysts for him to create his unique works.

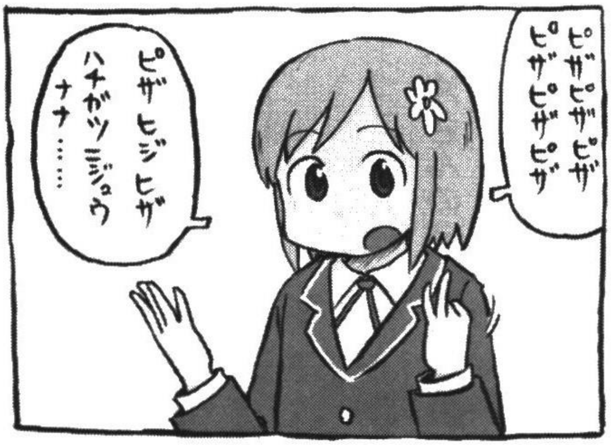

ピザピザピザ
ピザピザピザ
ピザ ヒジ ヒザ
ハチガツ ニジュウ
ナナ……

Illustration of Harumi Hosono, the protagonist of Daioki's work *Harumination*. Published on August 23, 2013.

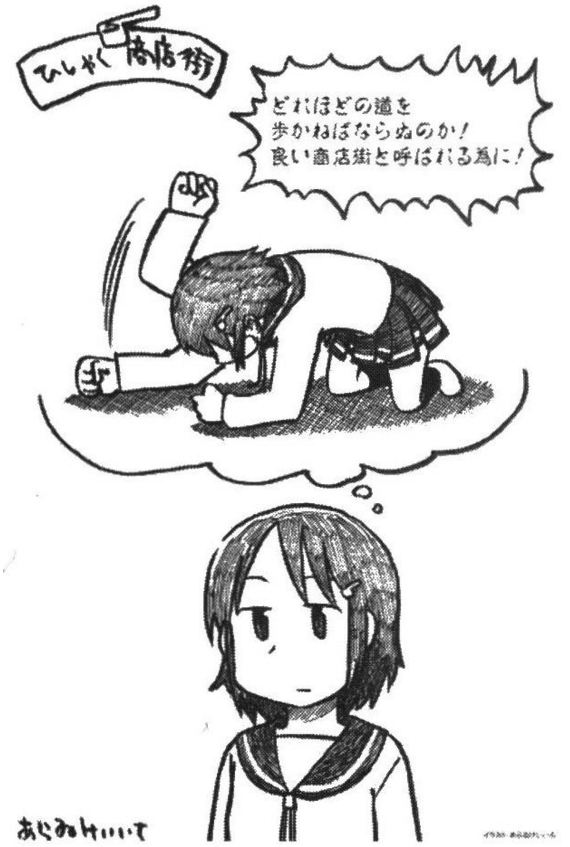

ひしゃく 商店街
どれほどの道を
歩かねばならぬのか！
良い商店街と呼ばれる為に！
あらみるけいいて

Illustration of Rokko Higashinada, the protagonist of Daioki's work *Waku Waku Rokkomotion*, included in the leaflet bonus for the purchase of Volume 1.

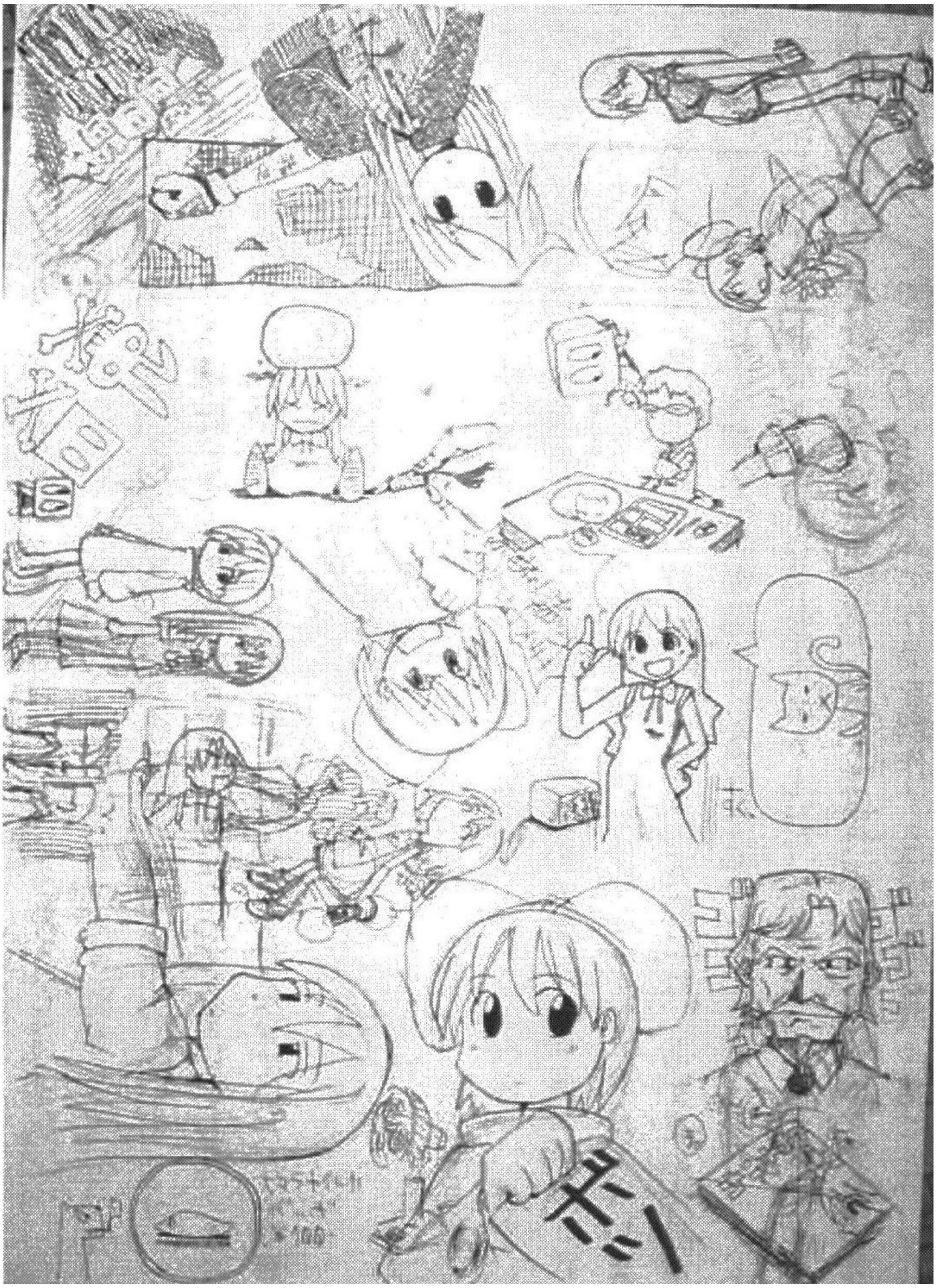


Illustration published on Himarayairuka on September 28, 2002: It shows the apprentice tengu, Nantonaku, with a large ribbon, and the box-shaped creature, Hako-kun.

The Job That Let Me Read Many Manga

Let's review Arawi's employment history, with some unavoidable overlap:

From 1996 to 1998, while aspiring to be a comedian, he worked at a karaoke bar. However, the insufficient income from comedy and the part-time job led to financial distress, which was a factor in abandoning the comedy path.

Next, he worked cleaning building windows. He likely held this job around 1999, when he moved to Kōenji, Tokyo.

Soon after, he set his sights on becoming a professional skateboarder. Simultaneously, he started publishing ink wash painting, reigniting his creative drive. Perhaps due to his surplus of energy, he switched from window cleaning to lunch delivery. By dedicating himself to this job full-time, his monthly income reportedly reached ¥500,000.

In 2001, as the 21st century dawned, Arawi was living an energetic life: practicing skateboarding, earning a living through transport work, and drawing ink wash painting.

> ***I delivered lunch boxes for about three years. I was earning about ¥500,000 a month back then... (Responding to a joke about whether he was delivering suspicious packages instead of lunch boxes) I was delivering all the time, seriously (laughs).*** [From *Quick Japan* Volume 86, "Report: Comitia Is Interesting!" (REPORT コミティアが面白い！)]

In the spring of 2002, Arawi was enjoying interactions with friends made through running his *Azumanga Daioh* fan site. However, he injured his foot in a skateboarding accident and couldn't continue delivering lunch.

Consequently, he took a part-time job soldering semiconductor parts, which he could do while sitting. Yet, he found no fulfillment in this work and, immersed in his online activities, he quit soon after.

Arawi decided that if he had to work, it had to be an interesting job to be worthwhile. He searched for a desk job that genuinely interested him and found a suitable position: phototypesetting (typesetting the characters for manga).

As a lifelong fan of manga, whose passion had been reignited by Azumanga Daioh, the work of manga prepress seemed attractive. Additionally, as a completely unknown field, phototypesetting was perfect for triggering a "Personal Revolution" that would surprise his former self.

> ***I thought the job had to be as interesting as my internet activity, or even more so, so I was flipping through job magazines. I had quit the part-time soldering job because I couldn't find any sense of purpose in it. Then, I found a prepress company that worked with manga. I immediately knew this was the job I wanted to do and called them.*** [From an interview for this book]

Arawi applied immediately, was successfully hired, and joined the prepress company Shinkōsha in August 2002, the same month he closed Azumanga Nantoka. Becoming a company employee meant commuting to Iidabashi, where the office was located.

株式会社
新興社
この先右折
後楽
2-1

The Shinkōsha company building (Left) and signpost (Right) in Iidabashi, Tokyo. Photographed in May 2019.

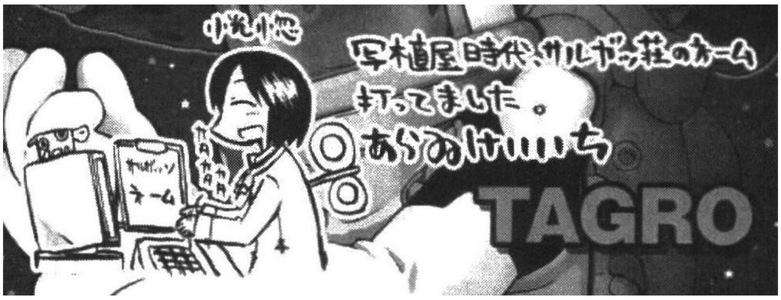
Working at Shinkōsha, Arawi gained direct access to the manuscripts and names (storyboards/drafts with finalized dialogue) published in manga magazines. Immediately after joining, he was primarily responsible for typesetting manga published by Enix (now Square Enix) and Hakusensha [13].

He has officially stated that, even after making his professional manga debut, he handled the typesetting for the manga *Uchū Chintai Sargasso* (宇宙賃貸サルガッ荘, "Space Rental Sargasso") and *Aa Tantei Jimusho* (ああ探偵事務所, "Aa Detective Agency"). Due to this connection through his typesetting work, he later contributed a recommendation blurb and an illustration, respectively, to the tankōbon of the authors, TAGRO and Shunzō Sekizaki [14].

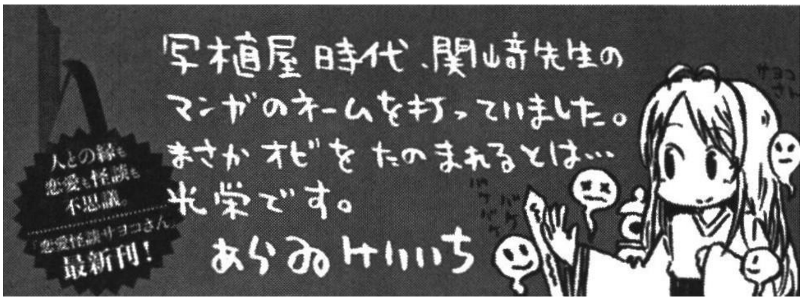
The environment—where he could review professional manga artists' manuscripts as part of his job—was a major stimulus for Arawi. For instance, in an interview for *Tia's Magazine 89*, he stated that the situation of being able to "read professional manga names on a daily basis was hugely influential for my creativity." In another interview, he reflected that the typesetting job was the impetus for him to start creating manga himself.

> ***I got a job at a typesetting company called Shinkōsha, and I started reading all sorts of manga for work. My job was to set the text in the speech bubbles, and the experience of seeing people's names (dialogue finalized, art in a rough sketch state) was educational and inspiring. When I was typesetting, the drawings were often messy, only the dialogue was present, and the pages weren't always in order. I would think to myself, "What's the name after this page?" or "The dialogue on this page is interesting." By developing ideas from that, I thought, "Maybe I can try drawing one myself."*** [From *Studio Voice*, "Keiichi Arawi: Off-the-Charts, Otherworldly Creativity!," January 2008 issue]

The process of taking inspiration from parts of other artists' work and developing his own manga ideas became the core foundation for how he would generate ideas when he started writing manga.


写植屋時代、サルガッソ荘のネーム
打ってました。
あらゐけいいち
サルガッソ
ネーム
TAGRO

Tankōbon band for TAGRO's *Uchū Chintai Sargasso* New Edition Volume1 (KC Deluxe, 2009).


写植屋時代、関崎先生の
マンガのネームを打っていました。
まさかオビをたのまれるとは…
光栄です。
あらゐけいいち
人との縁も
恋愛も怪談も
不思議。
「恋愛怪談サヨコさん」
最新刊！

Tankōbon band for Shunzō Sekizaki's *Ren'ai Kaidan Sayoko-san* (恋愛怪談サヨコさん, "Romance Ghost Story Sayoko-san")Volume5 (Jets Comics, 2013). Features an illustration of the character Sayoko Kashima.

Days Spent Thinking "I Must Get Better" Are Wonderful Days #1

The phototypesetting job at Shinkōsha, unlike Arawi's previous temporary work to earn wages, profoundly impacted his life. Exposure to professional manga manuscripts ignited a powerful desire to draw his own manga.

Furthermore, the work environment at Shinkōsha actively encouraged his ambition. Due to the nature of manga prepress, the company attracted many manga lovers, and quite a few employees aspired to be professional manga artists. In fact, he looked around and saw colleagues who had already been published in commercial magazines.

The fact that professional manga artists, whom he had once viewed as distant, worked in the same building as him was an enormous source of courage. This allowed the dream of becoming a manga artist—which he had once abandoned—to resurface.

> ***Since it was a typesetting company, there were quite a few [aspiring manga artists] nearby. There was actually a professional working on the same floor, so it was good stimulation. [...] I definitely thought, "Keep going!" (laughs). But honestly, he never got scolded much even when he was late, so I thought, "I wish I could sleep a bit more and be late too~." It was work → manga → dawn → work, after all.*** [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]

While told with a joking tone in the interview, his resolve to become a manga artist was far from trivial.

> ***After becoming an adult, I realized I needed to decide on my path. Since I was going to work, I decided to make it something I loved, so I joined a manga typesetting company in Iidabashi. The job involved typing the text inside the speech bubbles while looking at the manga artists' names provided by the publisher, which was highly satisfying for a manga enthusiast. However, looking at the names of the manga artists I saw every day, a thought gradually began to emerge: my childhood dream, a dream I had somewhat pushed away—"Isn't what I truly want to do drawing manga, not typesetting the text?"***
> ***Can I really become a manga artist if I start drawing now? But if I don't draw now, it might really be too late. This feeling motivated me, and I started drawing manga while working at the company. I was 24 years old.***
> [From "Manga Michi to" in *Manga Michi*, Shogakukan Gamanga Books Edition, Volume 6]

In late 2002, Arawi felt sensitive about his age as he aimed to become a professional manga artist. At 24, he was at an age where one might already be expected to be active as a professional in the industry. At the very least, he should have been honing his skills through practical manga creation.

Arawi, however, was essentially a beginner when it came to manga, despite his hobby illustrations and the illustrations for *Medical Asahi*. Moreover, he had failed at drawing manga not just once, but multiple times. It was natural to hesitate before pursuing the manga artist path.

Yet, it was precisely because he felt behind his peers that he solidified his determination to move forward. His quarter-century life, filled with detours, functioned as the perfect stage to ignite the flame of a "Personal Revolution"—to become a professional manga artist.

> ***We always wandered without a moment's rest***
> ***The world speeds toward tomorrow faster than the eye can see*** [15]
>
> ***I faintly sense the nuance***
> ***of the lamp that was flickering until yesterday beginning to burn brighter again.***
> ***I hope it's not a fleeting dream of this world, but I surely felt it in reality.***
> [From Himarayairuka, March 13, 2003]

Fortunately, the typesetting workplace provided him with the best possible textbooks: professional manga manuscripts. At work and at home, Arawi began studying various manga. As previously mentioned, he repeatedly practiced deconstructing various Manga Michiwn to their skeletal structure and re-fleshing them out with his own ideas.

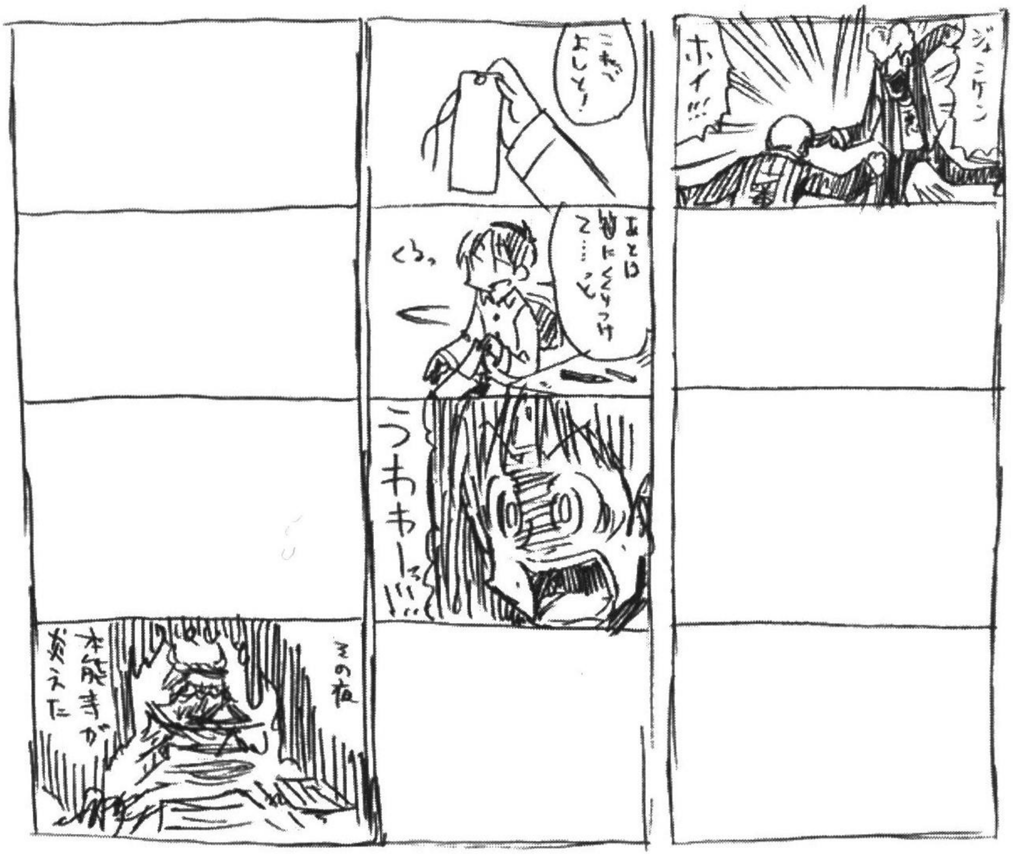
Arawi began aiming to be a manga artist in late 2002 and debuted professionally in a commercial magazine in January 2006. The reason he achieved success in just three years was not solely due to innate talent, but his earnest dedication to improvement. He gained deep insight into manga by reading others' works and learning their strengths.

> ***What I often did was deconstruct various gag works down to their skeletal structure and put my own gags back on them. The grammar of gags is unique to each person—the buildup, the punchline, and the timing are distinctive—and using that structure with your own content can change the impression significantly. Conversely, I would try using only my own structure and seeing what happened when I applied my art style. By doing that, I could see what I liked and which style had potential. [...] The difficult part is that what I find funny doesn't always align with my art style. When the art style and the story click, it's often in an unexpected place, and***

you can only find it by constantly drawing. And once you find it, you eventually get bored of it (laughs).

I once practiced by covering the punchlines of Masashi Ueda's Kobo-chan four-panel strips and drawing my own. Well... everything I drew was boring (laughs).

Since the publisher would send me complimentary copies of the magazines, I would skim through them, find an interesting panel, and then think of a story where that panel became the punchline, without even reading the original story. [From "Young Artists Ask 'The Secret of Manga!'" on the *Jump SQ.* official website]


ジャンケン
ホイ!!!
これで、よしと!
あとは机にくくりつけて…と
くるっ
うわわー!!!
その夜
本能寺が
炎えた

"Challenge 4-Panel" Name Manuscript, published on the official *Jump SQ.* website, "Young Artists Ask 'The Secret of Manga!'" In 2016, Arawi gave a rookie manga artist a partially blank four-panel manga as an assignment for a magazine interview. The rookie artist completed the manga by filling in the blanks, and they discussed the merits of the finished work together. Adding one's own ideas to a part of another artist's work—this was also a core exercise Arawi undertook as part of his manga training.

Days Spent Thinking "I Must Get Better" Are Wonderful Days #2

In January 2006, three years after pursuing his dream of becoming a professional manga artist, Arawi debuted with the four-panel gag manga *Kazemachi* (カゼマチ) after submitting his manuscript to a publisher.

Despite achieving his long-cherished ambition through persistent training, Arawi initially had no intention of quitting Shinkōsha. Although his work was published and he received payment, the financial insecurity of being a full-time manga artist was too great.

He didn't leave Shinkōsha until 2007, after the monthly serialization of Nichijou began. Shinkōsha generously proposed that he should focus on drawing manga, offering to keep his employment status active so he could return anytime.

Arawi was grateful to the company for supporting his dream. This assurance—that he had a place to return to even if he failed as a manga artist—allowed him to confidently present the interesting manga he believed in to his readers. His ability to fully express his individuality through *Nichijou* was partly due to the feeling of the company's backing.

> ***Even after being published in a commercial magazine, I didn't plan on quitting Shinkōsha. But the company proposed: "Why don't you concentrate on manga? We'll keep your time card, so come back anytime you want." After that, my frequency of coming into the office decreased, and thankfully, the serialization of Nichijou was decided, so I formally started life as a professional manga artist. I don't think I would have become a manga artist without Shinkōsha. Their support allowed me to pour myself into creation without reservation. Looking back, I realize again that I've had so much good fortune. It's a "series of miracles."*** [From an interview for this book]

Incidentally, shortly before leaving Shinkōsha, Arawi had a dramatic experience as he embarked on his career: he had the opportunity to typeset the manuscript for Nichijou with his own hands.

> ***Seeing the columns of text revives memories of my phototypesetter days. I have a fond memory of a senior colleague handing me the first one-shot of Nichijou and asking, "Arawi-kun, you wanna do this one?" and typesetting it myself.***
> [From a Twitter post on August 5, 2016]

To typeset his own manuscript, just as he had handled those of the professional manga artists he admired—in that moment, Arawi truly savored the happiness of having taken his first step as a manga artist. Standing on the same ground as his idols was a deeply longed-for aspiration.

However, the feeling he held upon achieving his dream was not just simple joy. As he reviewed his own manuscript, a fierce desire erupted: "I want to redraw every manga I've ever drawn before today."

> ***If possible, I want to redraw every manga I've ever drawn before today! I realized that this is connected to my driving force.***
> ***May the days spent thinking "I must get better!"***
> ***Be wonderful days.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "Stamp" (ハンコ), August 25, 2006]

When Arawi reread his own manuscript as a professional manga artist, the strongest feeling was, "I must get better!" Of course, he had always wanted to improve his technique and had engaged in trial and error. But to succeed as a professional manga artist, he realized he needed not just work that satisfied himself, but an intensely brilliant masterpiece that would exceed readers' expectations.

That is why he wished to raise the quality of every manga he had drawn up to that point by redrawing it all. He dubbed his life as a professional artist, one of continuous creative exploration, as "days spent thinking 'I must get better!'" and prayed that such a life would be "wonderful days."

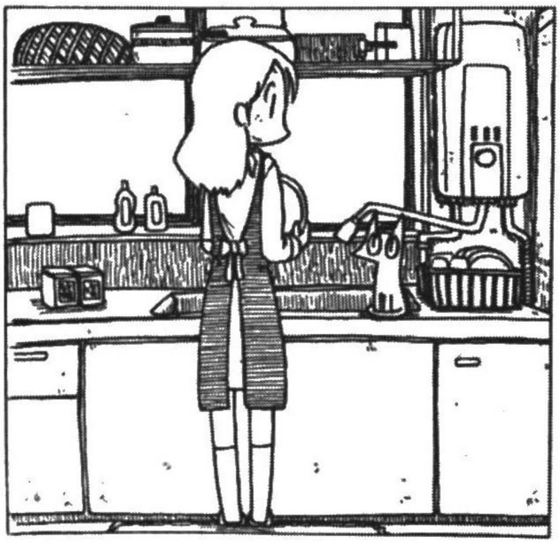


Illustration for *Futari Football Tantei-hen MATCH 24*:, "Otenki Onee-san" (お天気お姉さん, "Weather Girl"), published in *Young Animal*, September 14, 2012 issue. Arawi began serializing Futari Soccer in 2008 as a co-authored work with Yasuo Kurashiki. The magazine, *Young Animal*, was involved in prepress by Shinkōsha, and the text "Prepress: Shinkōsha" appeared in the corner of the magazine. His return to a manga magazine where he had once handled typesetting was a kind of triumphant return for Arawi as a professional manga artist.

Professional manga debut is not the final destination, but merely a milestone. While achieving one dream is wonderful, there's no time to stand still. He needed to push forward to reach even greater heights as a manga artist. This continued challenge was exactly what Arawi desired.

> ***Lately, I've returned to my old feeling of wanting to get better at drawing.***
> ***My immediate goal, I think, is to better distinguish between characters. The eyes, it's the eyes. And the hair. And the height, too. And everything else, maybe. It's everything. Yes! Give me a week! That's the feeling.***
> [From *Hirake!* afterword, "The Beatles Are Coming, Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!" (ビートルズがやって来るヤァヤァヤァ)]

It's important to note that Arawi often uses the Japanese hiragana (うまくならねば, "I have to get better" and うまくなりたい, "I want to get better") when discussing his desire to improve. This is because the Japanese word "umai" (うまい) carries a dual meaning, signifying both "skillful" (上手い) and "delicious" (美味い).

> ***I want my drawing to be delicious.***
> ***Not "skillful," but "delicious."***
> ***End of report.***
> [From Himarayairuka, April 7, 2003]

Arawi's ultimate goal was never merely to gain recognition from readers but to create work that he himself found funny and loved. His creative methodology, unchanged from before, was to incorporate a wide variety of elements that he personally liked.

Even after becoming a professional manga artist, the fundamental belief underpinning his creative activity never changed. And the stance of chasing the things he loved would continue unabated.

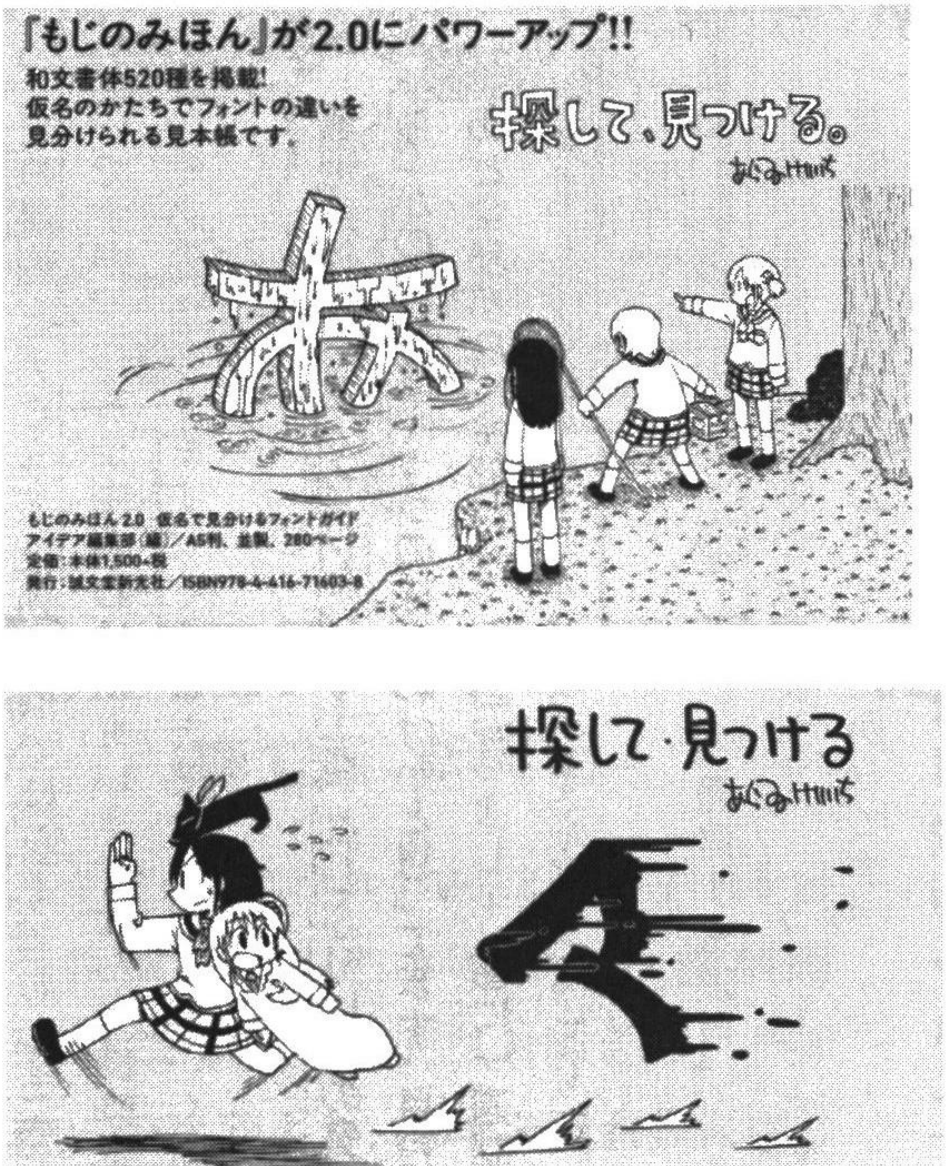

「もじのみほん」が2.0にパワーアップ!!
和文書体520種を掲載!
仮名のかたちでフォントの違いを
見分けられる見本帳です。
探して、見つける。
あらゐけいいち
もじのみほん2.0 仮名で見分けるフォントガイド
アイデア編集部（編）／A5判、並製、280ページ
定価：本体1,500+税
発行：誠文堂新光社／ISBN978-4-416-71603-8
探して・見つける
あらゐけいいち

Illustration for the in-store POP display of *Moji no Mihon 2.0: Kana de Miwakeru Font Guide* (もじのみほん 2.0 仮名で見分けるフォントガイド, "Sample Letters 2.0: Font Guide for Distinguishing Kana"). Due to his connection from his typesetting job, Arawi created the illustration for the book band and the in-store POP for this illustrated guide covering typeface samples.

---

[1]. It is stated in Arai-ryū Sumi-e that the ink used for the ink wash painting work was "Nara Seisendō Shien Yōboku Aozumi (奈良精泉堂紫煙溶墨青墨)" and the brushes were a "Menso brush made by Tokuōken Honten, Kanda, Tokyo (東京神田得鷹軒本店製　面相筆)" and a "Daitokuōken Chōryū (大得応軒長流)."

[2]. See an interview for this book.

[3]. A post on Arai-ryū Sumi-e dated October 28, 2001, recounts how Arawi's ink wash painting was named "Ikai" (異界, "Otherworld"). According to the article, a friend suggested the name "Ikai" when Arawi was struggling to decide on a title: I sent out a surprisingly hands-off message asking, "If you had to title this painting, what would it be?" Everyone sent various titles. The fact that everyone sent various titles suggests that my initial failure to title it was a major factor, doesn't it? I asked everyone for a title because I couldn't think of one myself. I thought that maybe the painting was just one that I "drew purely on feeling." The title "Ikai" was sent by one person. You might think that's very hands-off, but sometimes the words of others pierce your true intentions more than you realize. When I saw "Ikai" written in the email I received, I felt, "Ah, 'Ikai' is what I wanted to draw."

[4]. The "Arai Keiichi Simple History" on the top page of Arai-ryū Sumi-e contained the following description: Began drawing self-taught from a young age. Won the Prime Minister's Award for a landscape painting while in junior high school. After graduating high school, started down the path of an animator (Flash animation creator) but was drawn by the warmth of ink and began drawing ink wash painting self-taught. Draws in his own expressive methods and unique style, creating unconventional ink wash painting and ink wash painting as illustration, without using traditional, inherited techniques.

[5]. A post on Arai-ryū Sumi-e dated February 11, 2002, states that after watching the anime *s-CRY-ed*, Arawi watched all episodes of *Mugen no Ryvius*, which was handled by the same production staff. *s-CRY-ed* is a battle action series and *Ryvius* is a sci-fi ensemble drama, neither of which focuses on the cuteness of girls. This indicates that Arawi continued to watch various anime.

[6]. For example, Azuma also contributed a manga as a bonus for the Pioneer LDC anime *Dual! Parallel Trouble Adventure*. Arawi apparently also picked up this anime, as he quoted a line from the ending theme "Real" in a Himarayairuka post dated April 11, 2003: "I hear you, you've reached me, into the world inside me" (the exact lyric is in the world inside me). Later, in the October 2013 supplement of *4-koma Nano Ace*, he contributed a comment that parodied the next-episode preview for *Dual!* Episode 3: "Wait, wait! Why am I living with Sanada-senpai!? And spending all day dressed like that~! Ugh, what kind of world is this!!?"

[7]. Checking the bulletin board on Daioki's website, Dioxin, shows Arawi posted a greeting on March 12, 2002. On the 18th, he posted a thank-you note after Daioki added a link to Arawi's site. Given that Arawi launched Azumanga Nantoka on March 14, this shows the longevity of his relationship with Daioki.

[8]. In 2011, when Takuya Mitomi published his collected self-published manga, eratta, at Comitia 95, Arawi contributed the following comment: *"It's been nine years since I casually met Mitomi-kun. Nine years ago, neither of us was drawing manga; I think we mostly talked about music we liked and books we were reading. Whether our hobbies matched or our feelings connected, it was always fun to talk to Mitomi-kun. Gradually, we both learned to draw. Sharing the act of trying to incorporate an idea into a single picture, the frustration of the drawing not matching the imagined image, and the exhilaration of unexpectedly drawing a good picture—all of this was tremendously fun. However, like a broken gear, I became possessed by manga. In an attempt to justify that broken gear, I drew manga like a maniac, only to find Mitomi-kun's gear was broken, too. Conversations between two people with broken gears mix everything together, like continuously producing an answer that has no answer, which was both frustrating and fun. Rounding everything up, I think Mitomi-kun is a fun guy. That's all. This comment suggests that Arawi and Mitomi encouraged each other when Arawi began seriously aiming to become a professional manga artist."*

[9]. On the drawing bulletin board for Dioxin, Arawi's friends began posting fan art of Nantonaku between July 17 and 20, 2002. A fan art of Nantonaku was also posted on the drawing bulletin board of alkazuo's website, "Azuponi no Ojikan" (あずぽにのお時間, "Azuboni's Time"), on August 5. Furthermore, the access counter installed on the top page of Azuboni no Ojikan was designed in the image of Nantonaku and Hako-kun.

[10]. See *Studio Voice*, January 2008, "Keiichi Arawi: Off-the-Charts, Otherworldly Creativity!"

[11]. See Himarayairuka, "Dengeki Daioh," January 20, 2003.

[12]. See an interview for this book. (Incidentally, after Arawi debuted as a manga artist in 2009, he contributed a tribute manga titled "Limousine" to the *Ōsaka Banpaku* commemorative mook celebrating the 10th anniversary of *Azumanga Daioh*'s serialization. However, this work is positioned more as a tribute manga from a professional manga artist than fan art.)

[13]. See Himarayairuka posts from September 20, 25, October 3, and 11, 2002. These entries indicate that he handled typesetting for: Ranjirō Kanedaichi's *Jungle wa Itsumo Hare nochi Gū* (ジャングルはいつもハレのちグゥ) and Atsushi Ōkubo's *B-Ichi* (B 壱); Hekiru Hikawa's *Pani Poni* (ぱにぽに) and Tsuna Kitaumi's *Magical Antique* (まじかるアンティーク); and Kō Fuzuki's *Ai Yori Aoshi* (藍より青し). *Gangan* and *G Fantasy* were published by Enix, and *Young Animal* by Hakusensha. However, he was apparently not assigned to fixed magazines exclusively, as he handled typesetting for non-Enix/Hakusensha magazines shortly thereafter. In a Himarayairuka post dated August 4, 2003, titled "Tori" (酉), he expressed his joy at handling the typesetting for Akira Toriyama's short story *Nekomajin Mike* (ネコマジンみけ) in *Weekly Shōnen Jump* 2003 combined 37/38 issue, a magazine he had known since childhood: Due to the nature of the job, I was able to see Akira Toriyama-sensei's new work early. I don't want to say too much, so I'll just say this: "My Akira Toriyama is back." Yeah, that's what it is. I was floating all day.

[14]. In 2009, Arawi met TAGRO during a roundtable discussion for *Quick Japan* Volume 86. This connection is believed to have led to Arawi's contribution to the tankōbon band. The two were frequently socializing around this time, and Arawi appeared as a guest at TAGRO's club event, "Dai 3-Kai Oto Zemi" (第3回 音ゼミ, "The 3rd Sound Seminar"), in December of the same year. For this event, Arawi drew an illustration of Tokiko Gregory, a character from TAGRO's *Henzemi*, as a benefit for attendees.

[15]. These two lines were quoted from the lyrics of Bump of Chicken's "Melody Flag." "Melody Flag" was included in their then-latest album, *Jupiter*, released in 2003.

II. Himarayairuka #1

In 2003, as a first step toward becoming a professional manga artist, Arawi began participating in Comitia, an exhibition and sales event for self-published manga.

Comitia provided an environment where artists could publish the manga they loved, unconstrained by commercial publishing limits or trends. Supported by this free atmosphere, Arawi wrote experimental manga and cultivated his unique style and philosophy.

We can now examine his formative period of manga creation: the practice manga he published on his website, Himarayairuka; his first self-published manga, *Shiawase no Kakudo*; the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" (Self-philosophy Manga) set in the characters' internal worlds, *Hakoniwa* and *Hane*; and *Machi*, which, while containing philosophical themes, also established the foundations of his gag style.

(Note)

The following sections, from "II. Himarayairuka #1" to "IV. Toward a Professional Manga Career," will cover Arawi's self-published manga created between 2002 and 2006. These works were distributed at exhibition events before he became known as a professional manga artist, meaning only a very limited number of copies were ever printed.

Furthermore, Arawi has stated that he does not re-issue his self-published manga once they have been distributed [from kumomadori blog, March 18, 2008]. Therefore, it is assumed that the majority of readers of this book have not encountered the manga we are about to discuss.

That being said, there is no doubt that seeing Arawi's manga with your own eyes will deepen your understanding of this book. The commercially published commemorative volume, *Comitia 30th Chronicle* Volume1 (2014), exceptionally reprints his 2006 self-published manga *Hirake!* As this is the only work he distributed that is easily obtainable, reading it is highly recommended for those who have not yet done so.

Additionally, the compilation volume *Sasameyuki* (Light Snow), which contains four manga works from 2003, and the collected edition of the web manga *Helvetica Standard* that was published on his website in 2004, are held by the National Diet Library, Japan. Since anyone can view them by completing the necessary procedures, these are also recommended reading.

The Eve of Comitia (September–December 2002)

Information on Works Published in 2002

Nantonaku: Tengu Minarai Emaki (ナントナク　天狗見習絵巻, "Nantonaku: Tengu Trainee Picture Scroll")

- 1 page (4-panel manga)
- Published on Himarayairuka on September 17, 2002.

Manga-dō (まんが道, "The Way of Manga")

- 7 pages (7 one-page comics)
- "Part 1" published on Himarayairuka on September 23, 2002. "Parts 2 through 7" published by October 2002 (exact dates unknown).

Gona B (ゴナ B)

- 16 pages (Unfinished)
- Conception began on Himarayairuka on October 4, 2002.

Party de Aru Koto (パーティーである事, "The Act of Being a Party")
Yukimida no Shiro Mahō (雪見田の白魔法, Yukimida's White Magic)
Pino no Sanpo (ピノの散歩, Pino's Walk)

- 6 pages (3 two-page comics)
- Contributed under the name Cork to the dōjinshi *Tarutaru Bōkenki* (タルタル冒険記, Tarutaru Adventure Chronicle), which was themed after *Final Fantasy XI.* Published by the circle Pu-pāzu (Puーぱーず) at Comiket 63 on December 29, 2002 (Circle space East J21).

The Birthplace of Creative Manga

Arawi's strong sensibility from a young age helped him establish his identity through encounters with various subjects and works. After high school, he spent about seven years exploring various future possibilities, eventually setting his sights on becoming a manga artist in 2002, just before turning 25. He then diligently produced manga and debuted professionally in early 2006.

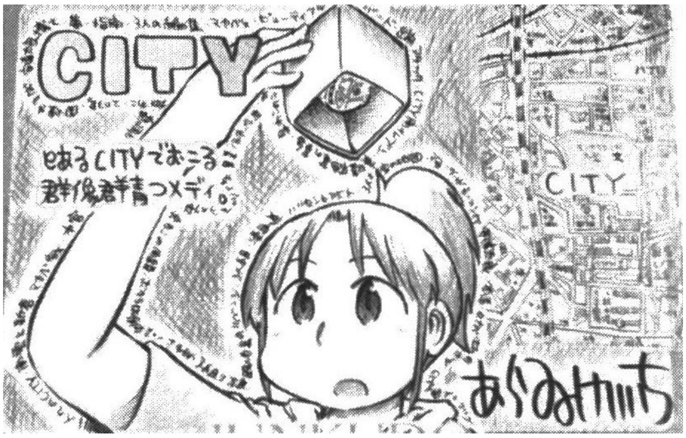
So, what kind of works did he create during those three years? We will now take a closer look at the path to becoming a professional manga artist, which was only briefly touched upon in section "I."

As an elementary school student, Arawi was captivated by the manga *Shiawase no Katachi.* He was greatly impressed by author Tamakichi Sakura's cute, deformed art style and game parodies. Even after entering junior high, he continued to read the manga, which had shifted to an essay format, finding the author's humorous daily life amusing.

His devotion continued into his youth; he kept reading the substantive sequels to *Shiawase no Katachi*, *Bōei Mangyoku Nikki* (防衛漫玉日記, "Defense Mangyoku Diary") and *Yūgen Mangyoku Nikki* (幽玄漫玉日記, "Subtle Mangyoku Diary"). While his career dreams shifted constantly after high school, his affection for Tamakichi remained consistent.

As his admiration grew, an opportunity arose to see Tamakichi up close. On April 15, 2001, a signing event was held for the release of *Sakura Tamakichi Kaiun Gashū: Shiawase* (桜玉吉海運画集 ～しあわせ～, "Tamakichi Sakura's Lucky Art Book: Happiness").

Hearing that his idol was coming, Arawi couldn't contain his excitement and went to the venue. Although he didn't win the lottery to formally attend the signing, he attempted to catch a glimpse of the artist [1].


CITY
とあるCITYでおこる
群像群青コメディ
CITY
あらゐけいいち

The venue where Tamakichi Sakura held his signing event was Junkudo Ikebukuro Main Store. In 2017, when the bookstore held an exhibition of "Manga Artists' Handwritten POPs" to commemorate its 20th anniversary, Arawi, by then a professional manga artist, contributed an illustration for *CITY.*

Tamakichi had documented his real-life experience distributing his work at a manga exhibition and sales event, Comitia (Comitia 50 in November 2000), in *Yūgen Mangyoku Nikki.*

In 2001, when Arawi was engrossed in skateboarding practice, he wasn't particularly moved by the existence of exhibition events. He wanted to meet Tamakichi Sakura, but his impression of Comitia itself was vague.

However, the seemingly distant Comitia would soon become a major part of his life. When he decided to pursue manga in 2002, he chose Comitia as the place to publish his work. Arawi called Comitia the "starting place" of his manga artist life.

> ***It's the starting place that directed my scattered creative urges to "create this and that" toward manga. [Since debuting as a professional manga artist], I haven't been able to participate in a circle often, but it's always right there beside me.*** [From Comic Natalie, "Comitia: What We Can Do Now for the Future of Manga, Part 4" (コミティア—マンガの未来のために今できること 第4回), September 30, 2020]

In the early 2000s, posting manga manuscripts online was not yet common. For amateur creators to publish work without going through a publisher, they needed to participate in an exhibition and sales event. However, most creations at such events were dōjinshi—fan comic magazines, largely based on existing works (secondary creation/parody). Most events were unsuitable for an unknown newcomer to publish original work.

Comitia, on the other hand, stood out as an event that exclusively accepted original, self-published works. Arawi visited a recent event, Comitia 62 (held in November 2002), for reconnaissance and confirmed that the venue he was looking for was there.

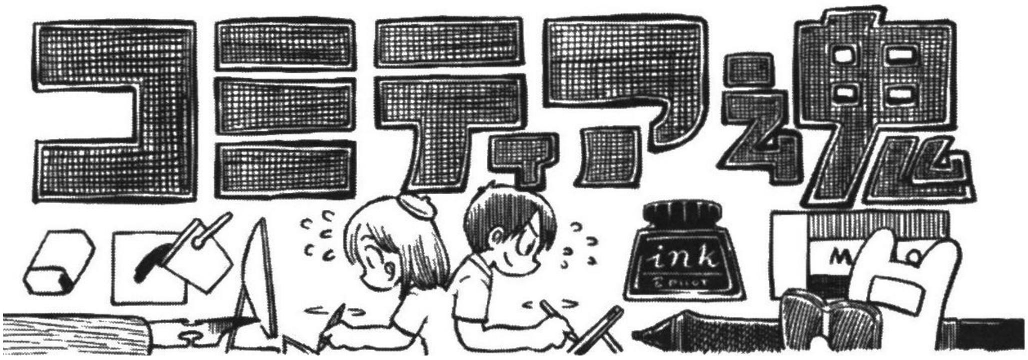
Countless creators were presenting their unique works, and readers visited the venue in search of unseen manga. Above all, leveraging its independence from commercial publishing, Comitia fostered a free environment where manga could be created irrespective of trends or best-sellers [3].

Overwhelmed by the venue's excitement and the collection of distinctive works, Arawi strongly felt compelled to join as a participant. He resolved to publish a manga at the next event, Comitia 63.

> ***It's the starting place that directed my scattered creative urges to "create this and that" toward manga. [Since debuting as a professional manga artist], I haven't been able to participate in a circle often, but it's always right there beside me.*** [From Comic Natalie, "Comitia: What We Can Do Now for the Future of Manga, Part 4," September 30, 2020]

While Arawi was aiming to become a professional manga artist around this time, setting Comitia participation as an immediate goal was crucial. The Comitia event date acted as a deadline, helping him establish the habit of regularly publishing manga. Indeed, over the following two years, 2003 and 2004, he would write seven new manga works.

> ***I really feel like Comitia raised me, so I want to value it highly, regardless of whether the event grows in scale or not. It's not about selling numbers; that connection is the most important thing.*** [From *Quick Japan* Volume 86, "Report: Comitia Is Interesting!"]



Title graphic for "Comitia Damashī" (コミティア魂, "Comitia Spirit") published in *Tia's Magazine 136*. In 2021, Arawi provided the title graphic and illustrations for Barubora's column series, "Comitia Damashī".

Go, Now, Be... The Manga Nantonaku

When exactly did Arawi first become aware of Comitia? Although he had known the name previously through Tamakichi Sakura's manga, he admits he wasn't familiar with the details. The catalyst for him to learn more was an introduction from an acquaintance who was knowledgeable about exhibition events in September 2002.

September 2002 was the same month he launched his website, Himarayairuka. Arawi was highly motivated during this period to create works that only he could draw. This is why he immediately jumped on the topic of Comitia.

Fired up, Arawi set the goal of exhibiting at Comitia and began drawing a manga based on the characters he had recently conceived: Nantonaku, the apprentice tengu girl, and Hako-kun, the tengu spirit. On September 17, he published the four-panel manga, *Nantonaku: Tengu Minarai Emaki*, on Himarayairuka. This was a monumental work as it was the first piece he began drawing using manga pens.

Seven years earlier, as a sophomore in high school, he gathered manga tools and started the practice piece "Pā-o" but couldn't finish it. Considering that, *Nantonaku* can be seen as the progenitor of his completed manuscripts and a major step in his journey as a manga artist.

> ***Practicing drawing directly with a pen without a pencil sketch.***
> ***And here I am, who has only ever held a technical pen, using a Kabura-pen for the first time.***
> ***Oh, I don't know what to say, the lines are wobbly, the lines are bleeding. It's tough going.***
> ***Practice is the only way.***
> ***My life for the foreseeable future will be: work → drawing → sleep → repeat.***
> ***I'll try my best with screen tones, too.***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Practice " (練習), September 17, 2002]

After publishing *Nantonaku*, Arawi bought tools like screen tones, nibs, and rulers, and began posting one-page manga and illustrations daily. The high frequency of updates on Himarayairuka suggests his excitement and vigor at finally starting the creative activities he had longed for. Incidentally, the funds for purchasing his manga tools were drawn from the manuscript fees for his Medical Asahi illustration work [4].

The pleasant surprise was that drawing manga was more fun than he had imagined. The world of manga expression was vast and bewildering, and Arawi, who was just peering through the entrance, felt lost. But the thought of gradually exploring this enormous world on his own felt like the most rewarding endeavor.

The writings on Himarayairuka reveal a young man thoroughly enjoying the process of drawing manga, his words overflowing with exhilaration.

> ***Drawing 1-page manga is fun.***
> ***I come up with the gag after I start drawing. It's random.***
> ***That's why it's fun.***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Scanner" (スキャナ), September 25, 2002]

> ***I still can't draw clean lines.***
> ***But it's not a struggle.***
> ***Scratching at the ink with the pen nib is an incredible feeling.***
> ***To heck with technique!!***
> ***The time you enjoy it is the time you improve!!***
> ***Yahoo!!!***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Doodles and Scribbles" (落書きと落字), September 28, 2002]

About two weeks after he started drawing manga, Arawi felt he had hit a wall with *Nantonaku* and began conceptualizing his next manga. The practice piece he started, intended for practicing characters, backgrounds, and manga pens, was called *Gona B*. While this manga was ultimately unfinished, it was his first attempt at a story-driven manga, spanning a total of 16 pages.

The title *Gona B* is derived from a typeface: Gona Bold (the bold version of the Nakamura Gothic font created by Yukihiro Nakamura). He likely repurposed the name of a typeface he learned about through his typesetting job directly into the manga title.

Later, Arawi would name his manga *Helvetica Standard* after the Roman typeface Helvetica and name a character, Shinonome C-Gengo (C-Language, later Nano Shinonome) after the Japanese font Shinonome Font. *Gona B* was the origin of his titles and characters derived from typefaces.

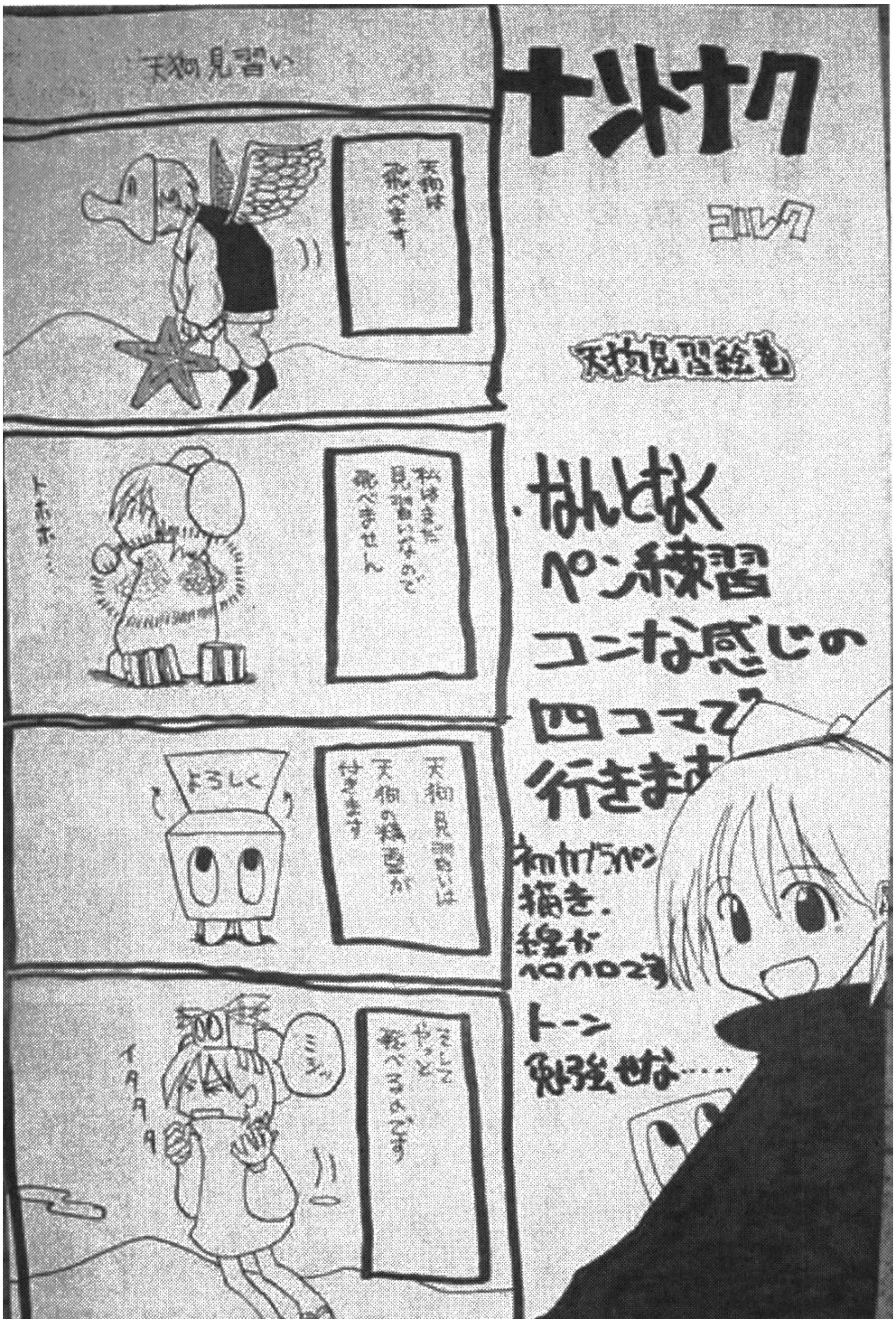
Interestingly, he broadened the concept by linking the sound of "Gona B" to the phrase "Go, Now, Be", which he explained as meaning "The present is progressing" [5].

> ***Honestly, the meaning of "Gona B" is "Go Now Be." It means something like "The present is progressing."*** [From Himarayairuka, "Gona B's Beginning" (始まりのゴナ B), October 5, 2002]

"The present is progressing" was rooted in the feeling that various things were subtly changing due to the passage of time. The significance of Arawi's sense of time is profound and, if explored in depth, connects to his later published works (a detailed discussion is reserved for "Volume 2" of this book).

For now, it's sufficient to say that Arawi, who had just begun drawing manga, was acutely aware of the changes happening within himself. Since aiming to become a professional manga artist and immersing himself in practice, his days were fulfilling, and every day brought growth.

The present is progressing. Chanting "Gona B," or Go, Now, Be, was likely a way of expressing the excitement he felt at the realization that his life was truly beginning to move in that very moment.


ナントナク
コルク
天狗見習絵巻
・なんとなくペン練習コンな感じの四コマで行きます
初カブラペン描き。線がヘロヘロです
トーン勉強せな……
天狗見習い
天狗は飛べます
私はまだ見習いなので飛べません
トホホ…
天狗見習いは天狗の精霊が付きます
よろしく
そしてやっと飛べるのです
ミシッ
イタタタ

Nantonaku: Tengu Minarai Emaki, published on Himarayairuka, September 17, 2002. It depicts the girl with the ribbon, Nantonaku, and the tengu spirit, Hako-kun. The figure in the first panel is the character Yamabushi, whom Arawi created the day before.

First Absurdist and Essay Manga: Gona B and Manga-dō

The manuscripts for *Gona B* are scattered and cannot be physically verified. However, Arawi described the basic story in an interview for this book, stating that *Gona B* was a bizarre tale of "a human and a brain with four legs traveling around various places."

The earlier work, *Nantonaku*, centered on the tengu girl Nantonaku and the tengu spirit Hako-kun. It is likely that Arawi developed the combination of a human-like figure and a mascot character from that work into *Gona B*, featuring a human and a brain wandering the world.

Alternatively, this strange combination of characters might be influenced by Jim Woodring. The American alternative comic artist Woodring gained high acclaim for his unique style, which combined cartoon-like characters with psychedelic imagery. His signature work, *Frank*, is a story about the bipedal animal Frank and his four-legged pet Pupshaw adventuring through a fantastical world.

Arawi was impressed by Woodring before his immersion in *Azumanga Daioh* and even visited an exhibition of his work at the time [7]. This may be why Arawi thought that drawing a manga with the cute art style of *Azumanga Daioh* but the worldview of *Frank* would result in an interesting work [8].

Indeed, shortly after starting *Gona B*, he declared his intention to draw a "surreal and warm story." *Gona B* maintained the bright tone he had sought since childhood while incorporating cuteness and absurdity.

> ***I finally started drawing a manga.***
> ***It will be about 16 pages long.***
> ***It's also for practicing figures, backgrounds, and pen-work.***
> ***The title is "Gona B."***
> ***Gona B is the name of a typeface.***
> ***It's a surreal and warm story. I'll do my best.***
> ***Maybe I'll distribute it guerilla-style once it's done.***
> ***I might post it here if I feel like it.***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Gona B" (ゴナ B), October 4, 2002]

Gona B represented an ideal manga for Arawi. However, portraying a chaotic worldview proved more difficult than expected. During the creation process, he concluded that he needed to further hone his skills to complete the work.

He decided to put *Gona B* aside and moved on to his next work, stating during his training that his "immediate goal is to acquire the skill to complete this manga" [9].

While *Gona B* has not been redrawn since then, the creative direction—drawing a pop story with absurdist elements in a cute style—was carried forward into his later works.

> ***I thought it would be interesting if I could use illustrations, manga, Flash animations, and music to stir the emotions of the viewers and listeners. That's when I came up with the concept for "Gona B." I decided on the theme first, and then planned to draw a chaotic worldview without any explanation. I wish I could secure the time to draw things like this, but I've always had too many other things I wanted to try, both back then and now, so it has been hard to realize.*** [From an interview for this book]

As introduced in the Junior High School Period section of "I. Early History," two major currents in Arawi's manga were the absurdist manga and the essay manga. If the source of the absurdist manga was *Gona B*, the source of the essay manga was born around the same time. Shortly before starting *Gona B*, on September 23, he published the manga *Manga-dō* (The Way of Manga), the first work to feature his self-portrait.

The circumstances surrounding the creation of *Manga-dō* are somewhat complex. The manga was, in fact, a happy accident that resulted when his plan to participate in Comitia ran aground.

Arawi had initially planned to create a dōjinshi with the acquaintance who told him about Comitia. However, the acquaintance was hesitant to participate. They had a bitter experience publishing an original manga at a previous Comitia where visitors failed to pick up their work.

Consequently, the acquaintance's views clashed with Arawi's desire to distribute original manga [10]. As a result, the plan for the two of them to exhibit at Comitia was canceled.

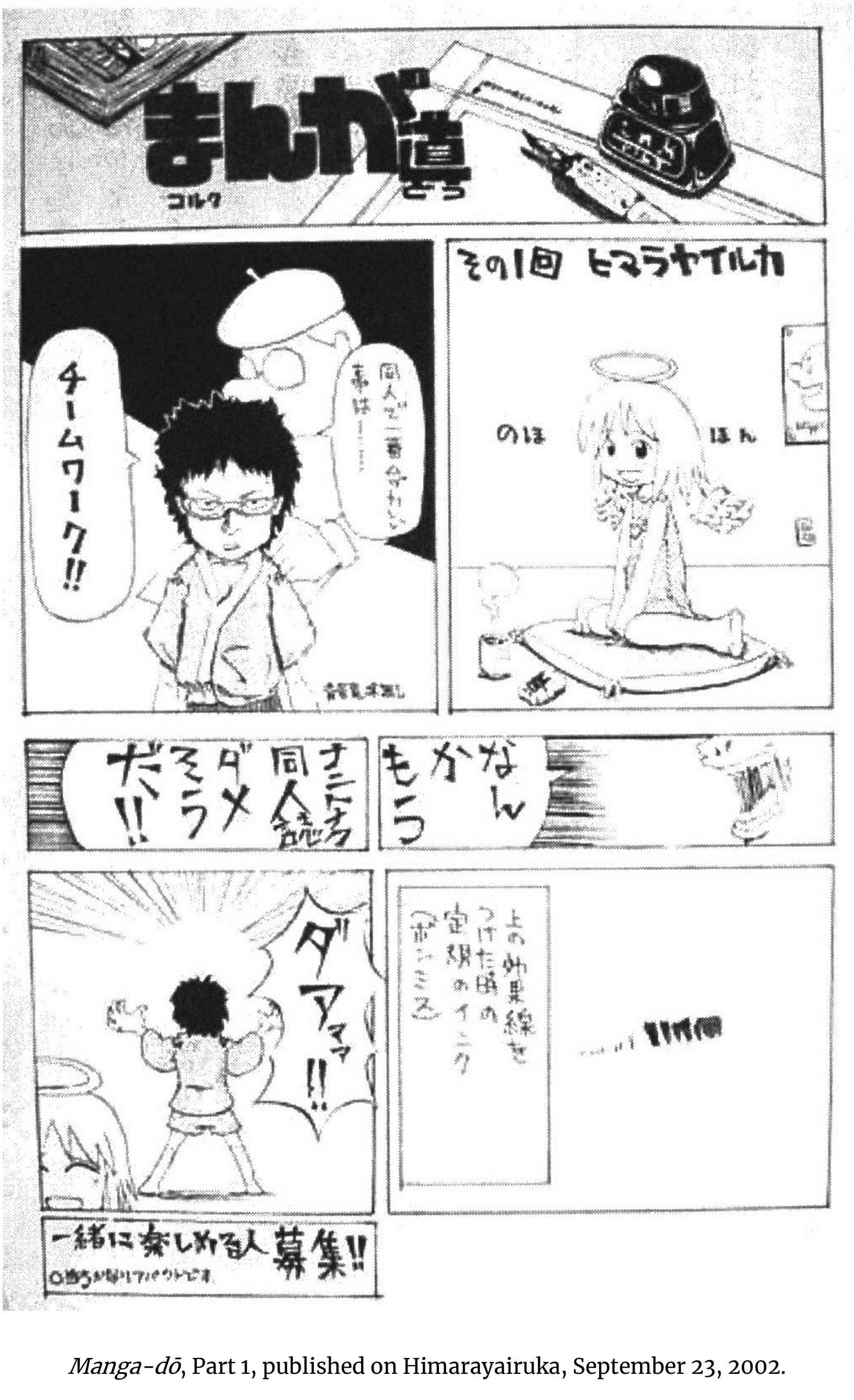
While Arawi generally prefers to work alone, this was his first time participating in an exhibition, so he had intended to participate with others. In fact, he was so eager to exhibit with acquaintances that he created a one-page manga recruiting drawing partners.

However, not only did he lose the support of his main contact, but his passion for drawing was dampened, leaving him disappointed. To distract himself from this slump, he turned to drawing manga, which was already becoming a part of his daily life. Arawi changed the dialogue of the manga he had intended to use for recruitment, instead having his self-portrait lament the failure of his circle participation plan. The resulting essay manga was "Manga-dō" [11].

If the Comitia participation plan had proceeded as scheduled, *Manga-dō* would never have been created. Instead, the failure forced him to participate alone, and by fortunate coincidence, an essay manga was completed.

The experience of having even unwelcome events in his life become opportunities to create manga gave him a deeper understanding of manga expression. The addition of the experience of drawing *Manga-dō* to the fun he was already having drawing manga led him to center his life even more on the craft.

Arawi was encouraged by the positive response to *Manga-dō* and continued to post sequels on subsequent days. Although those manuscripts are now lost, he seems to have published up to seven parts [12].


まんが道
どう
コルク
その1回　ヒマラヤイルカ
同人で一番[illegible]事は……
チームワーク!!
のほ　ほん
なんかもう
才能同人ダメそうだ!!
ダアァァ!!
上の効果線をつけた時のインク（ボンミス）
一緒に楽しめる人募集!!
○描ける描けないはノーカウントです

Manga-dō, Part 1, published on Himarayairuka, September 23, 2002.

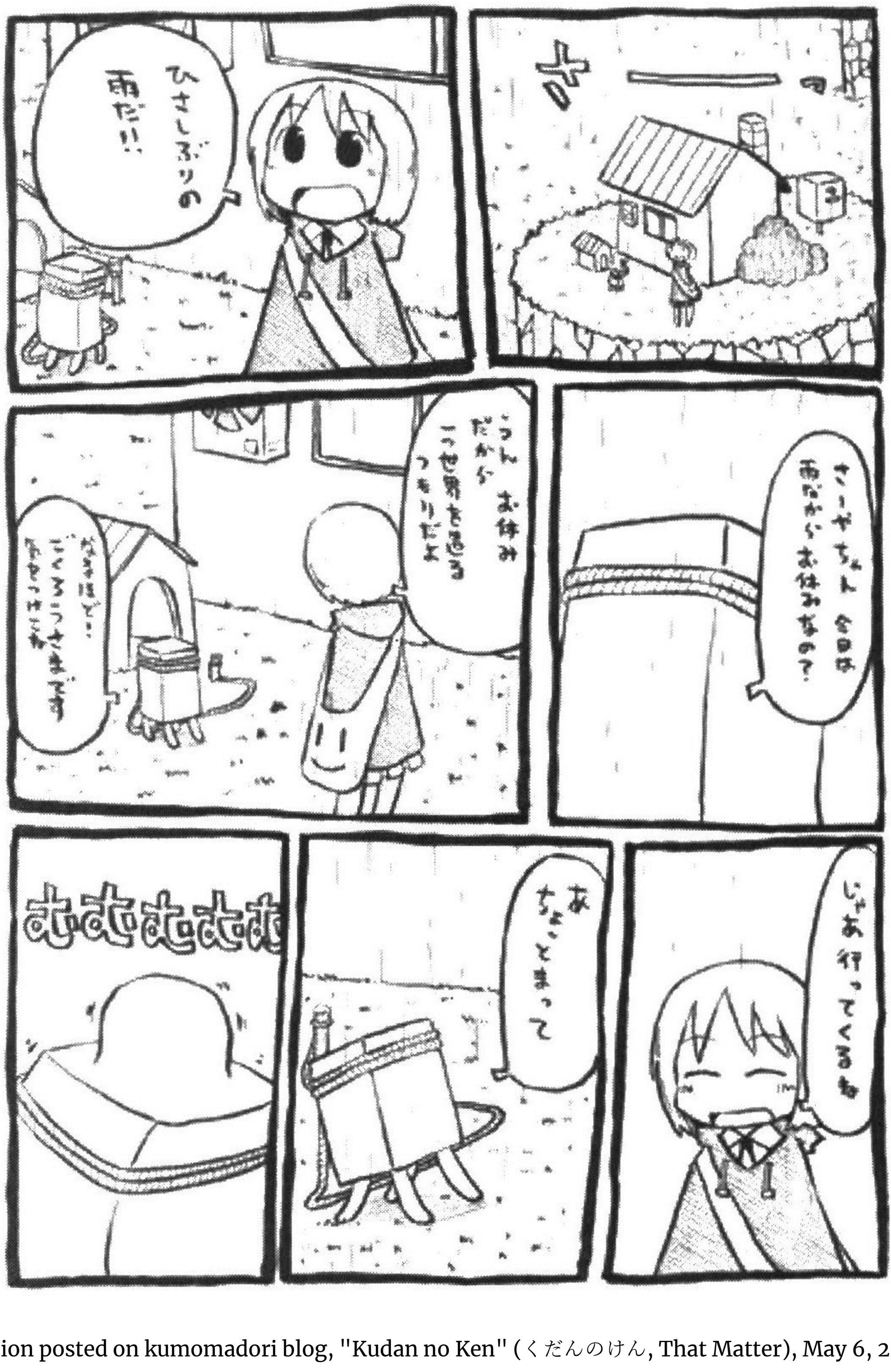

さーーーっ
ひさしぶりの 雨だ!!
さーやちゃん 今日は 雨だから お休みなの?
うん お休み だから この世界を巡る つもりだよ
なるほど… ごくろうさまです おきをつけて
じゃあ 行ってくるね
あ ちょっとまって
おおおおお

Illustration posted on kumomadori blog, "Kudan no Ken" (くだんのけん, That Matter), May 6, 2008. The opening panel of the work he intended to present at Comitia 84, a piece "conscious of Jim Woodring." (See footnote 8 in "The Eve of Comitia" for details.)

First Guest Contribution to a Dōjinshi: *Final Fantasy XI* Fan Manga

The company Arawi joined, Shinkōsha, attracted employees who also drew manga due to its prepress work. One such colleague, a senior who worked at the desk next to Arawi, published dōjinshi at exhibition events.

This senior took an interest in Arawi, who had recently started drawing manga, and invited him to be a guest artist for their dōjinshi circle, "Pu-pāzu" (Pu－ぱ－ず).

This occurred around October–November 2002, coinciding with the period when Arawi was starting his original works like *Nantonaku*, *Manga-dō*, and *Gona B*.

> ***"Pu-pāzu" was the circle of a senior colleague from my time at Shinkōsha. That senior didn't usually socialize much, but he talked to me since I was sitting next to him. When he learned I had started drawing manga, he invited me, "Want to draw for our circle?"*** [From an interview for this book]

Pu-pāzu planned to distribute a manga magazine themed around *Final Fantasy XI* at Comiket.

Arawi likely wouldn't have accepted the guest work if it had been fan fiction of a series he didn't know. But *Final Fantasy XI* was special. Although he initially struggled with the online game format, once he started, he found it fun and often lost track of time playing.

Most importantly, the game journalist Yasuhiro Nagata was on Arawi's mind. As introduced in the "Prologue," he was deeply moved by Nagata's review article on *Final Fantasy XI*, *Vana'diel Taizaiki*.

Therefore, Arawi decided to participate in the dōjinshi and dedicated himself to drawing the requested manga. He spent the entire month of December completing the six-page contribution. The senior colleague took the manuscript and distributed the dōjinshi, *Tarutaru Bōkenki*, on the first day of Comiket 63. This booklet was a significant publication as it contained Arawi's first completed published work.

Arawi's *Final Fantasy XI* manga was a significant work, even as a guest contribution. It contained elements that would lead directly to his subsequent original manga, *Shiawase no Kakudo*, which he would publish at Comitia the following year.

First, the character Pino, a Tarutaru girl (a small, magically proficient race), stands out. Pino is depicted as a completely unconcerned, self-possessed character. Her calmness is extraordinary; she doesn't even notice when attacked by an enemy and often falls asleep during combat.

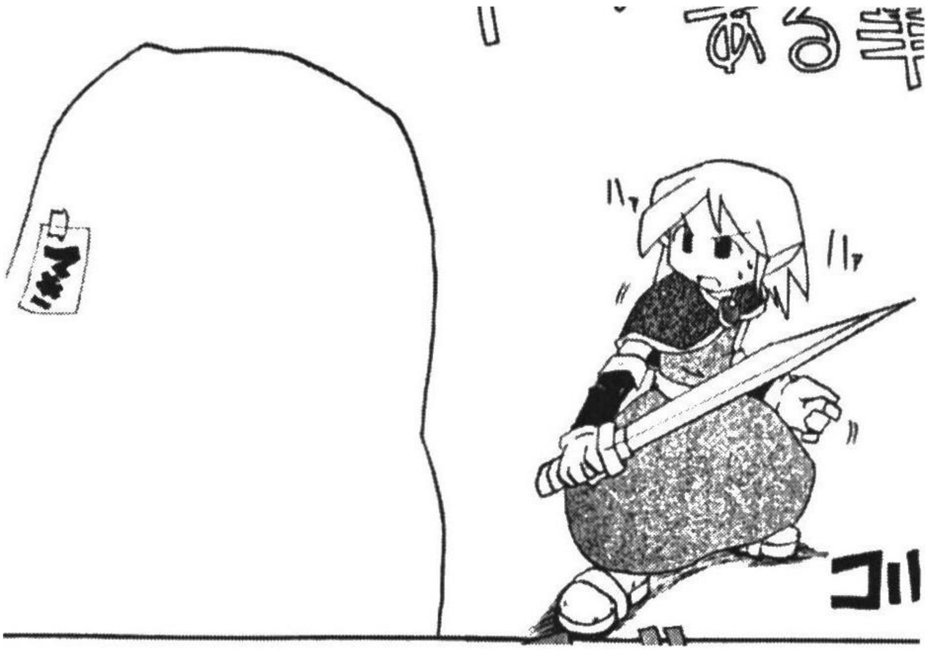
The protagonist of *Shiawase no Kakudo* was also an angel named Pino (using the angel design that first appeared in *Manga-dō*, Part 1), a testament to Arawi carrying over a character concept from the *Final Fantasy XI* manga into his next original work.

Furthermore, it is significant that this manga was presented as a serial format, dividing the six-page manuscript into three short, two-page stories. Shiawase no Kakudo also followed this structure, dividing its 16 pages into five short stories. The idea of stacking short narratives to create a longer work would later extend to his commercial serializations, such as *Nichijou* and *CITY*.

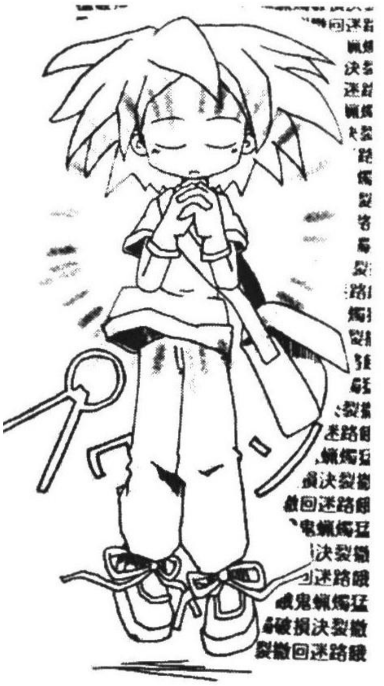
Most importantly, the manga's cheerful style paved the way for works created after *Shiawase no Kakudo*. The style of depicting the characters' goofy actions with a cute, deformed art style was born in this manga. After establishing the groundwork for absurdist manga with *Gona B* and essay manga with *Manga-dō*, the *Final Fantasy XI* manga solidified the elements of his gag manga.

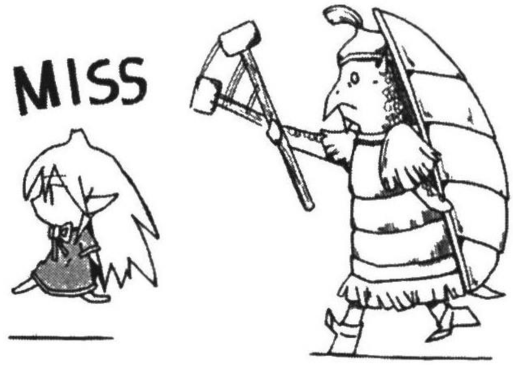
Incidentally, Arawi began to distance himself from *Final Fantasy XI* and played less around the time he finished this manga. This wasn't due to boredom; he judged that continuing to play the online game would consume too much of his time for drawing manga [13].

By quitting the game he was temporarily immersed in, he finally began to focus entirely on self-published manga. He registered for Comitia under the same name as his website, Himarayairuka, making his first exhibition participation a reality. The time was January 2003, right around his 25th birthday.



From *Party de Aru Koto*: An Elvaan female and an "teki" (enemy).





From *Pino no Sanpo*: The Tarutaru girl, Pino and the enemy character, Quadav. (right)
From *Yukimida no Shiro Mahō*: The Hume Yukimida. (left)

---

[1]. See an interview for this book.

[2]. See an interview for this book.

[3]. In the "Report: Comitia Is Interesting!" feature, there was a segment where the participants showed off self-published manga they acquired at Comitia 89 (held in August 2009). Arawi explained that he selected the manga based on the criteria of "uniqueness that only that person can draw." He said, *"I chose based on the criteria of the 'uniqueness that only that person can draw.' But when I went around today, everyone was so much better at drawing that this kind of work was significantly reduced, which made me sad. I like that pureness."*

[4]. See Himarayairuka, September 20, 2002.

[5]. A kumomadori blog post on September 21, 2007, titled "Gona B," contains the dialogue of a manga artist trying to communicate a font choice over the phone. The artist substitutes the font name Gona B with the phrase "go now be." Arawi must have enjoyed this wordplay between Gona B and "go now be." The dialogue reads: "Ah, um, for page 8... Yes. The line in panel 3, yeah, the one that says, 'Somehow, I'm tired~,' could you please use 18Q, yes, 'go now be' for that... Oh, yes. Thank you. Oh, no, the line, 'I want to eat a slightly expensive pudding' will be handwritten. Yes, thank you. Okay. Goodbye."

[6]. Strictly speaking, the dialogue from the final scene of the main story is excerpted in Himarayairuka on December 11, 2003, under "Excerpt from Gona B" (ゴナBより抜粋), which allows the plot to be inferred. For details, see "Internal World and 'Self-Philosophy' #2."

[7]. A post on Arai-ryū Sumi-e on December 9, 2001, includes the phrase: "Today's Grumbling: I must go to the Jim Woodring Exhibition this week!" The exhibition in question is believed to be the "Jim Woodring Exhibition" held at Span Art Gallery in Ginza from December 10–16, 2001. Since the manga magazine *AX* vol. 23, which featured a special on Jim Woodring, was released two months before the exhibition in October 2001, it is believed Arawi learned of Jim Woodring through this magazine.

Additionally, a diary entry on Himarayairuka on June 7, 2003, recounts his delighted purchase of a soft vinyl figure of Woodring's *Frank*: "I was casually in Nakano. I unexpectedly found a soft vinyl of Jim Woodring's work. The price was 3,000 yen. Instant buy. It's just the best. The shop clerk said something like, 'Jim Woodring isn't popular in Japan, which is why it was still here.' Goodbye to the days when I almost cried when Sony told me it was out of stock. I feel like I accomplished something. Plus, the second series of gacha-gacha is scheduled for July. I'm too happy!!"

[8]. In May 2008, Arawi completed a short manga (title unknown) for Comitia 84, which was scheduled for the same month. He stated in an interview for this book that he drew this manga consciously referencing Jim Woodring's work. However, Arawi had to miss Comitia that day due to a personal commitment, and the work was never distributed. The manuscript itself has also been scattered and cannot be physically verified. He said: "I drew this manga wanting to create a work like Jim Woodring's. I think it was a short manga, maybe six pages. The plot was about growing rice, and when you threshed it, the sun would come out and the rain would stop."

However, the first page of the manga intended for Comitia 84 was posted on the kumomadori blog on May 6, 2008, under "Kudan no Ken," allowing readers to grasp the atmosphere. The post was accompanied by the caption: "It was a story about how God is lonely but trying their best."

[9]. See Himarayairuka, December 11, 2003.

[10]. While diligently practicing drawing manga, Arawi was also fleshing out his ideas for goods to be distributed at Comitia. At the time, he was planning to create a Flash animation in addition to the Nantonaku manga: "A Nantonaku dōjinshi. I'll print 100 copies. It would be nice if about 20 sold. I'll also make a front and back half of a Flash animation and sell it on a CD-R. Well, I'll sell it little by little next year. The venue will probably be a place called 'Comitia'." See Himarayairuka, "Dents," September 19, 2002.

[11]. See Himarayairuka, "Nantonaku Dōjinshi Vanishes!?" (ナントナク同人誌消滅!?) September 23, 2003. "When I finished drawing this manga, the 'Nantonaku Dōjinshi Creation Group (tentative)' vanished. But I'll still do it! I'll do it even if I'm alone!! Ghosts don't exist!! Well, whatever. So, I changed all the dialogue in the speech bubbles and uploaded it. Things just somehow work out."

[12]. See Himarayairuka, December 11, 2003.

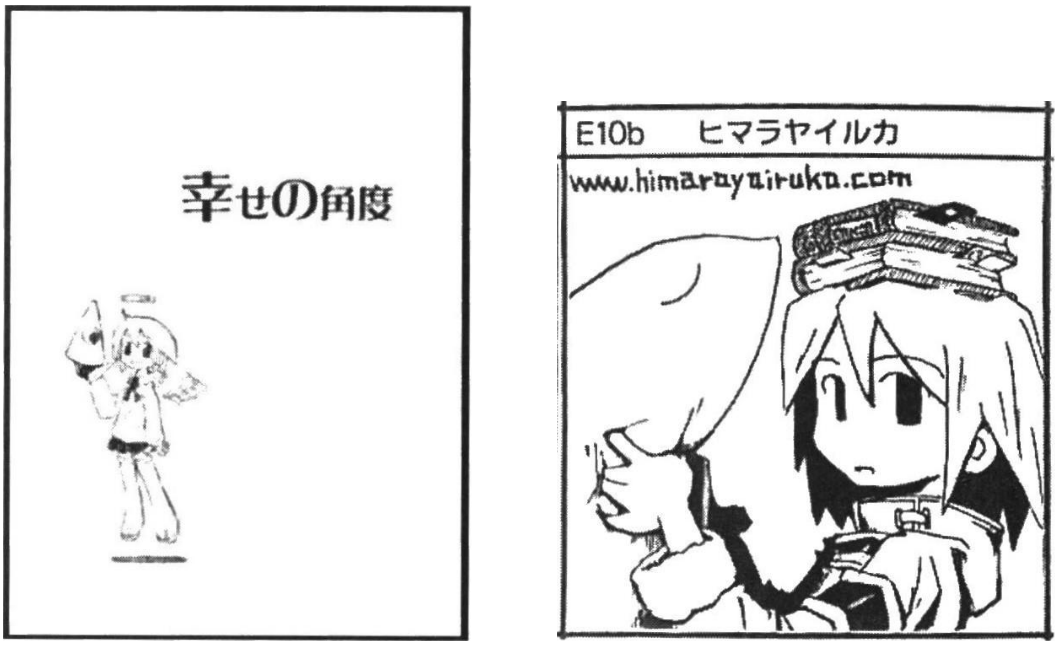
[13]. Arawi stopped playing *Final Fantasy XI* in December 2002. He later stated that he stopped playing because he bought another game, *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, the following January. See Himarayairuka, January 4, 2003.

However, a Helvetica Standard note posted on June 10, 2022, titled "The Story of Being Unable to Live in a Game Anymore," mentions that he was immersed in *Final Fantasy XI* for nearly half a year. Given that Arawi joined Shinkōsha in August, became engrossed in drawing manga from September–October, and drew the guest manuscript in December, the actual time he spent playing the game may have been shorter.

Angel's Perspective: Contemplating *Shiawase no Kakudo* (February 2003)

Shiawase no Kakudo (幸せの角度, "The Angle of Happiness")

- February 23, 2003, at Comitia 63 (Circle Space E10b)
- Copybook (photocopied), B5 size, 20 pages total, Circle Name: Himarayairuka, Byline: Cork.


幸せの角度
E10b ヒマラヤイルカ
www.himarayairuka.com

Left: *Shiawase no Kakudo* cover.

Right: Himarayairuka Circle Cut published in *Tia's Magazine 63*.

From "Futsū-chan" to "Angel Pino"

In early January 2003, after completing the *Final Fantasy XI* fan manga, Arawi began conceptualizing an original manga for the Comitia event scheduled for the following month.

The first new work he started conceiving was "Futsū-chan" (普通ちゃん). Although this work was never completed, it was planned to feature the exploits of a bandaged girl named Futsū-chan and a mysterious cyclops entity with a rectangular body named Hakonome (はこのめ) [1].

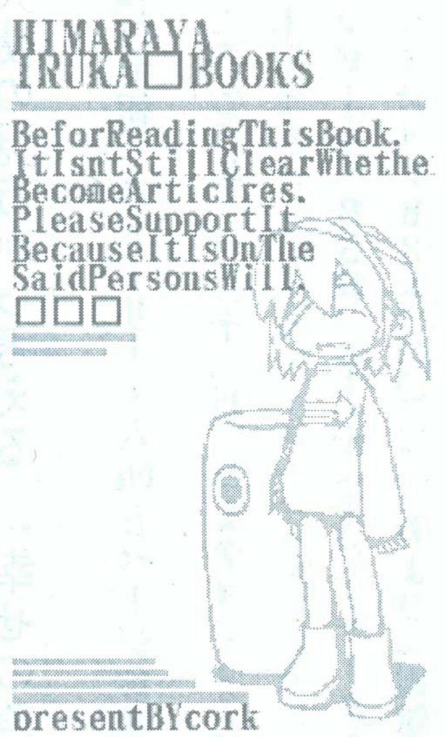

HIMARAYA
IRUKA□BOOKS
BeforReadingThisBook.
ItIsntStillClearWhethe
BecomeArticlres.
PleaseSupportIt
BecauseItIsOnThe
SaidPersonsWill.
□□□
presentBYcork

Illustration published on Himarayairuka, January 11, 2003. Features Futsū-chan (Right) and Hakonome (Left). This illustration was self-remade in 2019 as a bookstore purchase bonus for *CITY* Volume 9.

The concepts for Futsū-chan and Hakonome were an extension of Nantonaku and Hako-kun from *Nantonaku*, and the human and the four-legged brain from *Gona B*. Here, too, the combination of a human-shaped girl and a mascot character was evident.

What is notable is the clearly defined personalities of Futsū-chan and Hakonome. Arawi published their comical exchanges in dialogue format on Himarayairuka.

In these skits, the contrast between the baby-talk, innocent Futsū-chan and the cynical, somewhat pitiful Hakonome is pronounced. By pairing contrasting personalities, both characters gained distinct individuality.

> ***Futsū-chan: "My scarf is warm. It is soft and feels nice."***
> ***Hakonome: "Is that so? I'm cold, but... I don't mind. ...I can't wear a scarf anyway, since I'm just a box after all..."***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Futsū-chan" (普通ちゃん), January 5, 2003]

> ***Hakonome: "Thank you for everything, Angel. It's time to say goodbye."***
> ***Angel: "Hakonome..."***
> ***Hakonome: "Until we meet again, somewhere..."***
> ***Angel: "...Nah, forget it."***
> ***Hakonome: "...Huh!?"***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Dorodoro~" (ドロドロ～), January 7, 2003]

Arawi's interest then shifted to the angel he had drawn as a supporting character for "Futsū-chan." From late January, he began to build a concept centered on this angel. The angel was named Pino, after a character in his *Final Fantasy XI* fan manga.

Simultaneously, he conceived of a mascot character, Sankaku (三角, "Triangle"), to be Angel Pino's sidekick. Sankaku, with a conical body and a single eye, is undoubtedly an evolution of Hakonome [2].

Carrying forward the dynamic of the innocent Futsū-chan and the pitiful Hakonome, Arawi developed stories where the free-spirited Angel Pino causes chaos for Sankaku. The manga he presented at Comitia did indeed focus on the commotion created by these two.

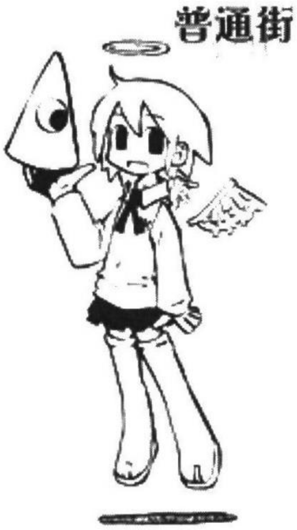
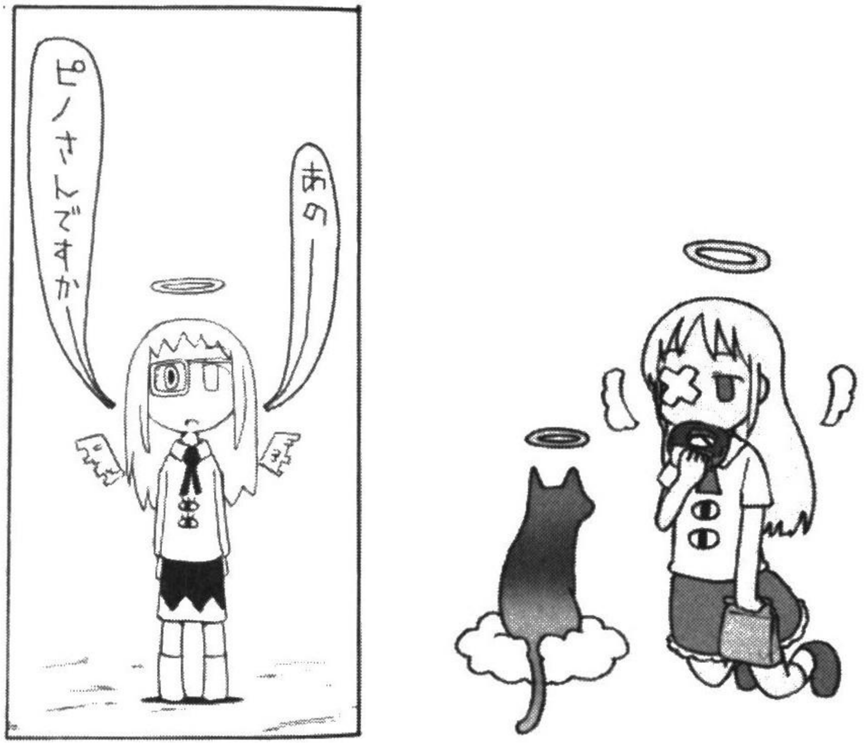


Illustration published on Himarayairuka, January 30, 2003. It's clear that angel Pino and Sankaku are an evolution of Futsū-chan and Hakonome. This illustration was also used for the cover of *Shiawase no Kakudo*.

After conceiving Pino and Sankaku, Arawi created other characters [3]. This led to the introduction of Yuki, a Second Class Angel who is Pino's junior [4]. Unlike the carefree Pino, Yuki is serious, creating a clear personality contrast. However, due to her junior status, she can't openly object to Pino's wildness and, like Sankaku, is constantly at the mercy of her senior's actions.

With Pino acting innocently and both Sankaku and Yuki being thrown into confusion, a situation was created where their contrasting personalities enhanced each other, forming the basis for a delightful gag manga.



Left: From *Shiawase no Kakudo*, page 10: The scene where Yuki makes her first appearance.
Right: Illustration "Mono-Eye" published on June 9, 2013. Mono-Eye was created using Yuki as a model.

Incidentally, the three characters created for this work have been remade multiple times in later years. This likely stems from a deep attachment to them as the key figures in his first Comitia publication[1].

Specifically, "42 The Angel and The Triangle" included in *Helvetica Standard Italic* is a redraw of the first three pages of this work. Furthermore, the setting in "59 The Angel and The Triangle," where the tip of Sankaku can be eaten, is also carried over from this work. Additionally, Pino and Sankaku appear in the first panel of "01 Grim Reaper" in the commercial serialization of *Helvetica Standard*.

Yuki also reappears in the commercial serialization of *Helvetica Standard* under the name Mono-Eye, and the motif of the girl with an eye-patch is carried over to the Professor in the web manga version of *Helvetica Standard*.

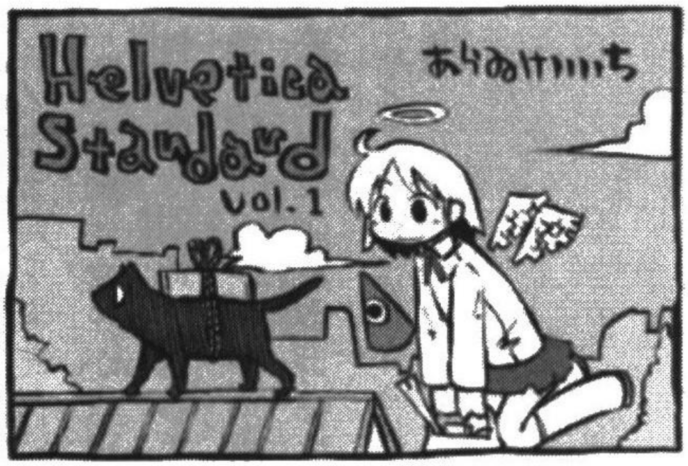
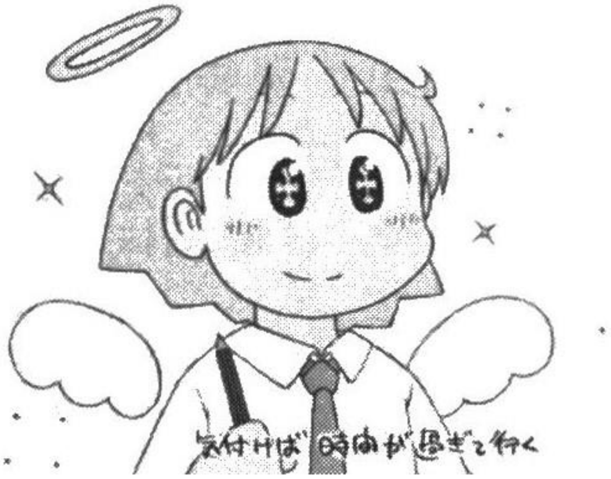
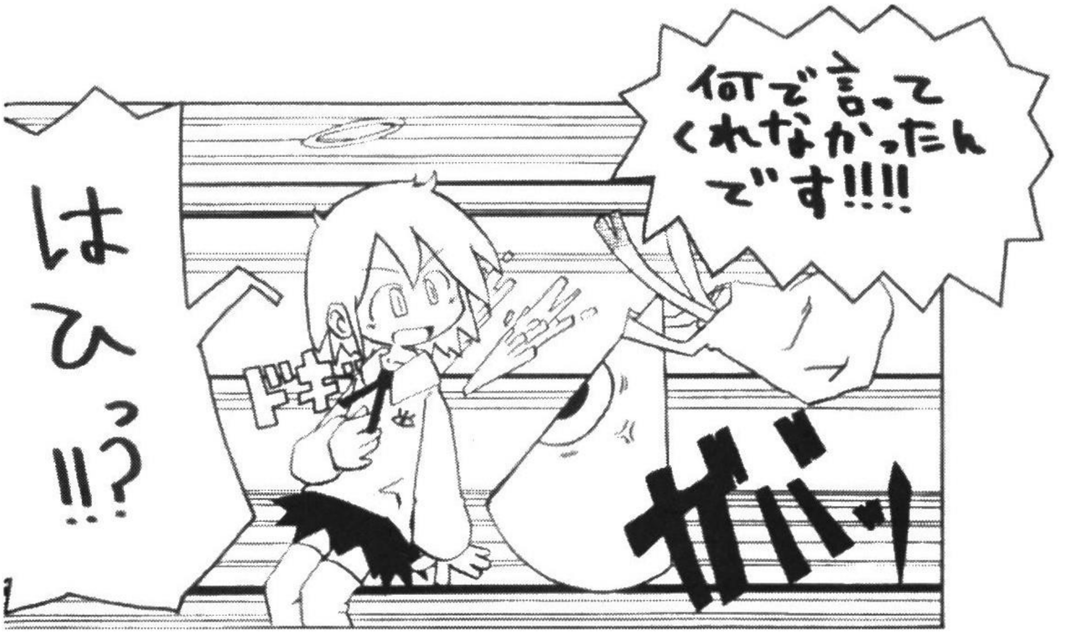

Helvetica Standard
vol.1
あらゐけいいち

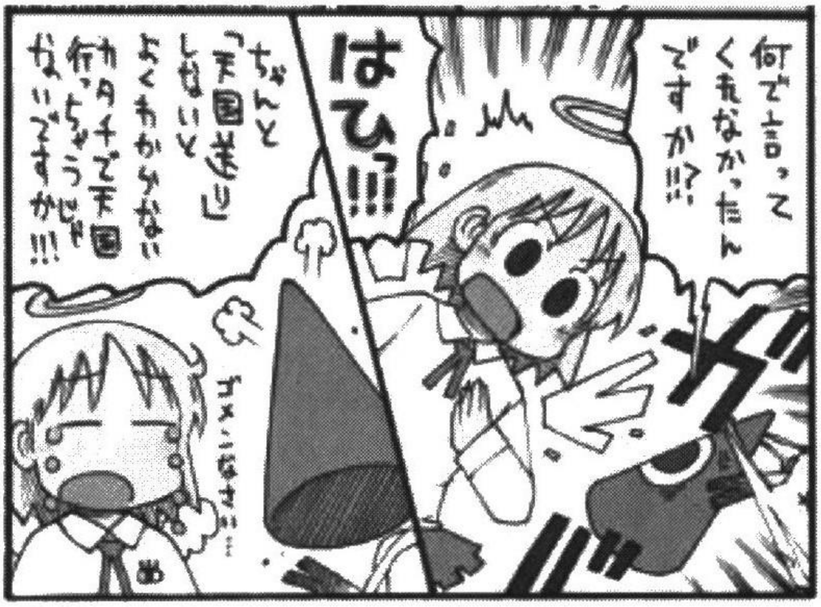
Illustration within commercial serialization of *Helvetica Standard*, "01 Grim Reaper". Pino and Sankaku are inserted into the opening scene.


気付けば時間が過ぎて行く

Pino and Mono Eye also appear in the animated work *Arawi Keiichi Short Animation: Ekaki Uta* (Drawing Song), uploaded on YouTube in 2020.


何で言ってくれなかったんです!!!!
ドキッ
はひっ!!?
ガバッ

From *Shiawase no Kakudo*, page 2.


何で言ってくれなかったんですか!!?
はひっ!!!
ちゃんと「天国送り」しないとよくわかんないカタチで天国行っちゃうじゃないですか!!!
ゴメンなさい…
ガバ

From *Helvetica Standard Italic*, page 6. The work *Tengoku*, published in *Monthly Newtype* February–March 2013 issue, was a self-remake of the page 2 of *Shiawase no Kakudo*.

Reality Lies Within "An Ordinary Everyday Life"

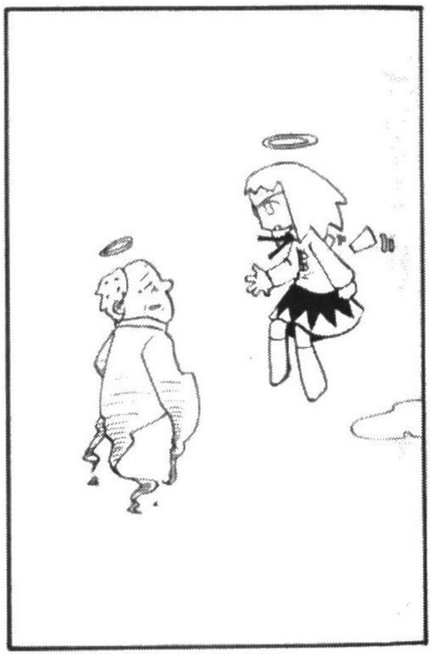
What kind of lives do Angel Pino, her junior Yuki, and Pino's overseer Sankaku lead? Being angels, they could be living in the heavenly realm, or they might be staying on Earth with humans.

Arawi conceived of the latter setting. He established that the angels were dispatched to Earth to carry out "Tengoku Okuri" (天国送り, "Heavenly Dispatch"), the job of guiding the souls of the departed to the celestial world.

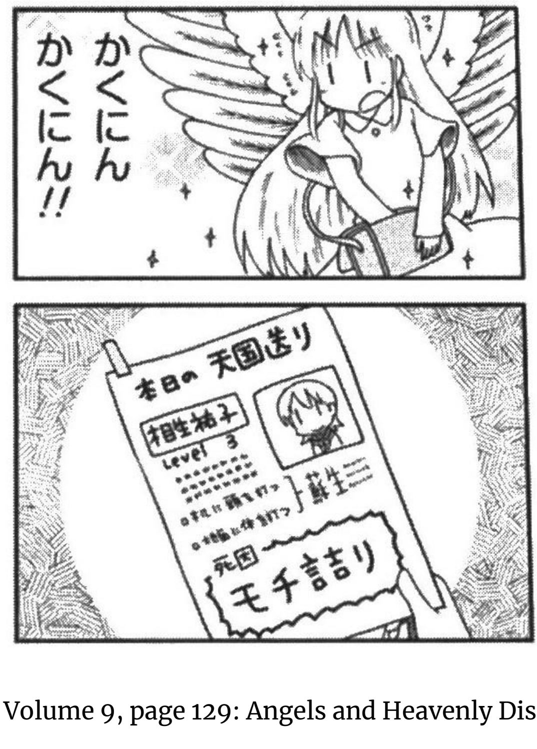
He also included the setting that their living expenses on Earth were provided by Heaven each time they successfully completed a Heavenly Dispatch. The originality of this work lay in depicting angels as laborers who receive a wage in exchange for their work.

Incidentally, the world-setting involving the celestial realm and angels was later adopted in other manga. Although the name of the realm changed to Tengoku (Heaven), the concepts of angels, Heaven, and Heavenly Dispatch held significant meaning in the self-published manga *Homare* and the commercial works *Futari Soccer 2-shiaime* and a manga published in *Nichijou* Volume 9 [5].

Arawi's frequent depiction of worlds featuring the celestial realm (Heaven) suggests that this setting held profound meaning for him. The reason he was not satisfied with this single work and repeatedly drew scenes of angels working in Heaven will be explored in "Volume 2" of this book.



From *Shiawase no Kakudo*, page 14: Yuki performing the Heavenly Dispatch job.


かくにん
かくにん!!
本日の 天国送り
相生祐子
Level 3
蘇生
死因
モチ詰り

From *Nichijou* Volume 9, page 129: Angels and Heavenly Dispatch reappear.

Returning to the Comitia manga, Arawi combined the pre-planned character of Pino with the world-setting of the celestial realm and Heavenly Dispatch. This resulted in a scenario where Pino, despite being sent to Earth on a mission, is unserious about her job and spends her time playing around.

With Pino's character defined, the roles of Sankaku and Yuki naturally followed. Sankaku was assigned as Pino's supervisor but is constantly troubled by his master's refusal to work. Yuki, unlike Pino, is portrayed as a junior who diligently applies herself to the job.

Having settled on the characters and the setting, Arawi immediately began drawing the manga. Pino does not work earnestly on Earth and only wastes their money. Sankaku attempts to make the thoughtless Pino work, but with poor results. Predictably, their food supplies run out, forcing the two to live a meager existence in a makeshift tent.

Yet, even when penniless, Pino remains unbothered and carefree. Sankaku, by contrast, worries about the future and desperately hopes for a Heavenly Dispatch job request, but no one seems to be dying at the moment. As a result, they fall into such extreme poverty that they must resort to catching and eating ants and pigeons on the roadside. Thanks to Pino's innocent personality, the story avoids becoming overtly dark, but a thread of sad and comical financial hardship underlies the narrative.

A story featuring angels might suggest a dramatic plot involving death or fantastical descriptions of the celestial world. However, nothing dramatic happens around Pino and her companions. On the contrary, their inaction is precisely why they endure their impoverished life.

The fact that the angels lead "an ordinary everyday life where nothing happens"—the very lack of eye-catching incidents—is what profoundly characterizes this story.

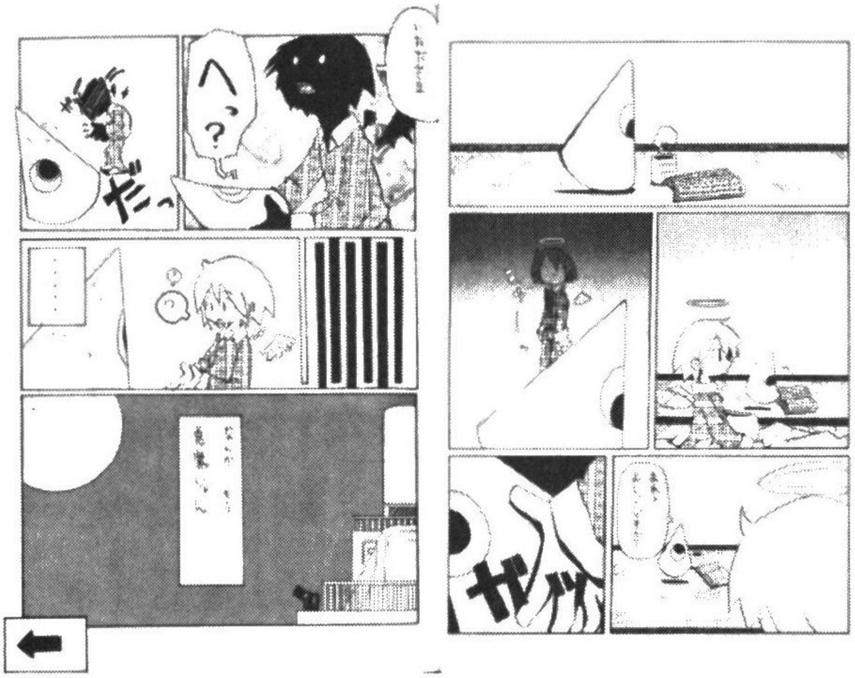
> ***The ordinary everyday life where nothing happens to the "Angel" and "Triangle," who are in the business of dispatching the departed to the celestial realm.***
> ***16 pages are divided into 5 shorts, to create an angle.***
> ***The way a person sees things, the way others see things, the way manga is seen.***
> ***That sort of feeling.***
> [From Himarayairuka Work Introduction, "Shiawase no Kakudo"]

This work was later given the subtitle, as a matter of fact, actual hides during the general day. [6]

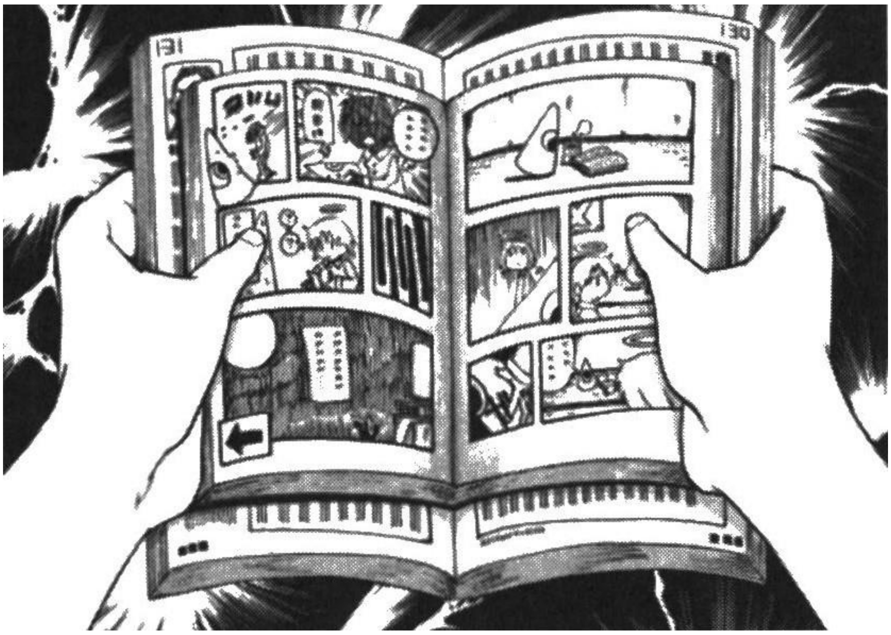
When writing this, Arawi intuitively felt that what he should draw were not astonishing events or extraordinary incidents. That is why he comically portrayed a slice of life—Pino and Sankaku struggling after losing their money.

Focusing on the characters' daily lives rather than special events or incidents—this narrative approach may be rooted in the influence of *Azumanga Daioh*. The key feature of *Azumanga Daioh* was its depiction of the "ordinary everyday life where nothing happens" to high school girls. The revolutionary aspect of that work was its focus on the realistic daily lives of students content with their fun school days.

Arawi was once drawn to Azuma's art style and frequented the fan community. During that time, he likely thoroughly absorbed the style of *Azumanga Daioh*. However, instead of creating a school manga as a variation on his predecessor's work, he created a celestial world setting and then proceeded to draw an "ordinary everyday life where nothing happens." By taking the core theme from a favorite work and reinventing it, he shaped a manga that was uniquely his own.



From *Shiawase no Kakudo*, page 5-6: Pino, suffering from hunger, almost instinctively tries to eat Sankaku while sleepwalking at night.



From *Nichijou* Volume 2, page 83: The manga book being read by a character is modeled after pages 5–6 of *Shiawase no Kakudo*.

A Title Celebrating Happiness and the Japanese Song That Sang of It

Arawi initially gave this manga starring Pino and company the working titles "Futsū-gai no Jūnin" (普通街の住人, "Residents of Normal Town") or "Futsū-gai" (普通街, "Normal Town"). The inclusion of the word "Futsū" (normal/ordinary) was likely an expression of his intent to depict "an ordinary everyday life where nothing happens."

Alternatively, it may have contained a paradox, intentionally using the word "ordinary" while focusing on angels beyond human comprehension. This sense of using "ordinary" to describe a world slightly askew from common sense can also be seen in his later manga *Futsū* and *Nichijou* [7].

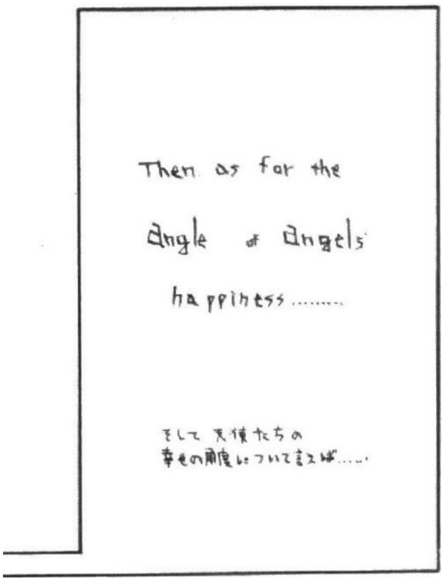
However, the title "Futsū-gai" was ultimately not used. A different title suddenly came to Arawi [7]. The title he belatedly conceived was "Shiawase no Kakudo" ("The Angle of Happiness").

> ***When the words "Shiawase no Kakudo" flashed into my mind, I thought, What a wonderful title! And I still think it's a great title.*** [From an interview for this book]

In this work, Pino and Sankaku were living in poverty because they neglected their Heavenly Dispatch duties. Despite this, they were not unhappy. Pino didn't worry about being out of work and tried to make a living by selling drawings on the street. Sankaku worried about their future but was not discouraged and diligently foraged for food. Both were living a free and enjoyable daily life.

If one focuses on the fact that they gained unconstrained freedom in exchange for hunger, whether Pino and Sankaku are "happy" becomes a matter of perspective. The title "Shiawase no Kakudo" suggests that the happiness or unhappiness of angels, and by extension, humans, cannot be easily determined just by changing one's angle of thinking.

Furthermore, if happiness or unhappiness is simply a matter of perspective, a parallel theme running through this work is that anyone can be happy simply by changing their attitude [8].


Then as for the
angle of angels
happiness........
そして 天使たちの
幸せの角度について言えば……

From *Shiawase no Kakudo*, page 14: The title of this work is presented in a narration: Then, as for the angle of angels' happiness. As is evident at a glance, Angel and Angle are an anagram. Arawi may have conceived the title, (The Angels') Angle of Happiness, from this wordplay.

This philosophy is supported by the lyrics of the Japanese song "Happy End" (はっぴぃえんど) that Arawi quoted on his website just before completing the work [9].

"Happy End" speaks about what true happiness is. It asserts that human happiness is determined not by "how it ends" but "how it begins," and not by "what you possess" but "what you desire." Therefore, the song argues that fairy tales with happy endings or success stories of wealthy company presidents have nothing to do with true happiness.

These lyrics resonated with the poor but positive and bright life of Pino and her companions. *Shiawase no Kakudo* proclaimed, right from its title, that one can be happy even in poverty, and that these characters genuinely were.

Arawi mentioned that after quoting the lyrics of "Happy End," he said the album it was on "overflows with creative drive" whenever he listens to it. The message, "It's not how it ends, it's how it begins," and "It's not what you possess, it's what you desire," may have been a message he was telling himself as he embarked on his journey to become a manga artist.

In the story, Pino starts selling drawings on the street to make a living in their poverty. One can see Arawi, who had just begun pursuing his dream of becoming a manga artist, reflected in this image.

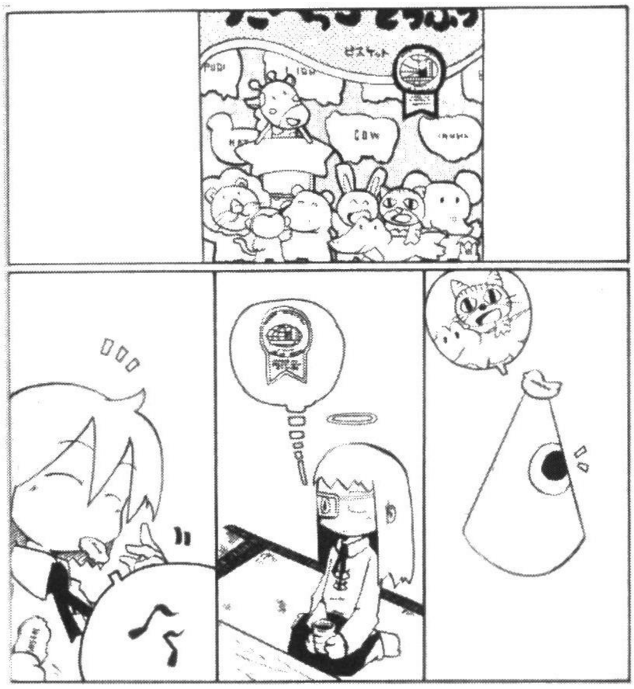
In the final scene, the junior angel Yuki visits the temporary tent where Pino and Sankaku live. Yuki, who unlike her senior faithfully performs her job and is not struggling financially, offers Pino a snack: "Tabekko Dōbutsu Biscuits" (たべっこどうぶつビスケット, Animal-shaped biscuits sold by Japanese snack manufacturer Ginbis).

Yuki had previously visited Pino and was served ants she had caught on the roadside, as the penniless Pino couldn't afford any other food. Yuki likely brought the biscuits because she was worried about her senior's extreme poverty.

Pino invites Yuki in, and the three of them enjoy the biscuits together. As they savor the biscuits and the animal shapes molded onto them, Pino and the others are clearly overflowing with happiness [10].

The story had proceeded on the premise that the interpretation of happiness or unhappiness in Pino's impoverished life changes based on one's perspective. In the end, as the angels are enveloped in the modest yet certain joy of smiling while eating something delicious, it is affirmed that they are undoubtedly happy.

Shiawase no Kakudo concludes in a truly "Happy End" fashion.



From *Shiawase no Kakudo*, page15: Pino, Yuki, and Sankaku enjoying the animal biscuits.

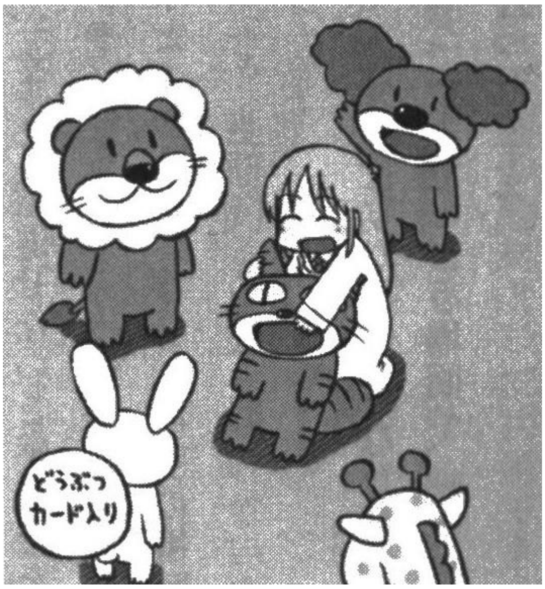


Illustration published on December 3, 2012. It depicts the mascot characters on the Tabekko Dōbutsu Biscuits package. This drawing was remade as a bookstore purchase bonus illustration for *CITY* Volume 11.

Inverting the Perception of Death

Jumping ahead to 2018, fifteen years after completing *Shiawase no Kakudo* and now established as a professional manga artist, Arawi watched an animated film: *In This Corner of the World*, which depicts a woman surviving wartime during the Asia-Pacific War.

After watching, Arawi was deeply moved but confessed that he could never watch it again. He found the depiction of human death, unavoidable in a war-themed work, too painful to revisit. He then recalled other cinematic masterpieces, *Grave of the Fireflies*, *Saving Private Ryan*, and *Platoon*, and admitted they also caused him distress. War and human death remained subjects he could only view once.

> ***In This Corner of the World. I love the movie, but it's so heartbreaking that I can't bring myself to watch it again. Scenes like the girl holding the protagonist's hand being killed by an unexploded bomb, or the final scene with the war orphans—just remembering them makes my chest hurt. Looking back, I've only watched works like Grave of the Fireflies, Saving Private Ryan, and Platoon a single time. This dichotomy of "Interesting but unwatchable" exists around me when I consider war films. I wonder if others have incredible mental fortitude, or if mine is particularly weak. I wish "Death" could be treated as a happy comedy.*** [From an interview for this book]

As a child, Arawi feared the dark and the images of death and war it conjured. He tried to conquer this fear by watching manga and anime with bright, pop styles. This tendency remained even after he became an adult and a manga artist, maintaining his commitment to a pop and cheerful atmosphere.

However, since starting his creative work as an adult, he also made another discovery: there is no subject more dramatic or captivating than human death. The conflict of "Interesting but unwatchable" likely arose from the contradiction between his ideal of a pop style and the realization that death could be exploited as material for manga.

The internal struggle with works centered on human death simmered within Arawi for a long time. With this in mind, let's re-examine *Shiawase no Kakudo*.

The depiction of death in this work is quite unique. The angels, Pino and others, are indifferent to the human deaths that occur. Pino completely forgets and neglects her Heavenly Dispatch duty, and Sankaku's motivation for getting her to work is solely for the paycheck. Yuki takes the Heavenly Dispatch seriously but treats it strictly as a job.

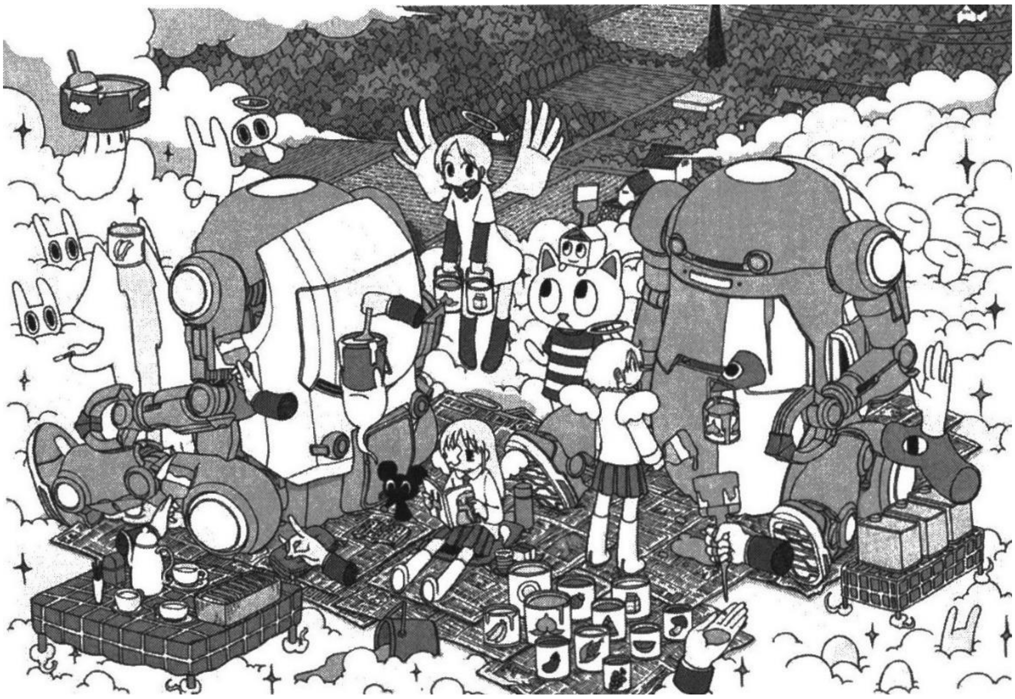
They are involved with the souls of the deceased through Heavenly Dispatch but show no emotional involvement whatsoever with human death itself. This is characteristic of the angels in the story. Let's re-read the introduction to Shiawase no Kakudo: The ordinary everyday life where nothing happens to the "Angel" and "Triangle," who are in the business of dispatching the departed to the celestial realm. To the angels, human death was tantamount to "nothing happening."

The angels aren't necessarily heartless; they simply don't concern themselves with human death due to the difference in their positions. If anything, they might even view a human death as fortunate because it means they can do their job, and human longevity as unfortunate because it means no pay.

Through the Heavenly Dispatch setting, Arawi created an absurdist world that inverted the perception of death. This worldview served to liberate readers from the common fear-driven view of death. By changing the angle of thinking from a human perspective to an angel's perspective, the work successfully incorporated human death into a bright, pop style without making it terrifying.

Works depicting dying humans are "Interesting but unwatchable." By expressing human death through the angels' value system, *Shiawase no Kakudo* managed to be a manga that is both interesting and repeatable. It was a work that handled the subject of human death without becoming dark, fulfilling the wish that Arawi articulated: "I wish 'Death' could be treated as a happy comedy."

Another reflection of the desire to view human death as happy is the depiction of the celestial realm (Heaven). Heaven was not a direct setting in *Shiawase no Kakudo*. However, Arawi later illustrated the world above the clouds as he envisioned it. In 2015, the packaging for one of the Mechatro WeGo plastic models, illustrated by Arawi, was set in Heaven.



Box art from "1/35 Scale Plastic Model Mechatro WeGo No. 03 Light Blue & Pink."

In this illustration, angels including Pino, along with Sankaku and various mysterious creatures, are colorfully painting robots (Mechatro WeGo) in Heaven. The angels look visibly joyful, devoting themselves to painting in various colors.

Furthermore, a caption explains that the paint made in Heaven is sweet and delicious. The childlike dream of colorful, delicious paint helped create a pop worldview for Heaven.

> ***Heaven's paints, like peach or banana flavor, are all made of delicious liquid. This means the angels can paint deliciously! Yay!*** [From the box art commentary for "1/35 Scale Plastic Model Mechatro WeGo No. 03 Light Blue & Pink"]

Arawi depicted this happy space above the clouds and called it Heaven—a place where angels like Pino, mysterious beings like Sankaku, and even the souls of dead humans can all enjoy themselves. Everyone can savor sweet and delicious things.

If people can believe that the deceased are all transported to such a pop Heaven, the somber impression of death is bound to be at least partially dispelled. Both Shiawase no Kakudo and the depiction of Heaven fulfilled the creator's wish to treat human death as a happy event.

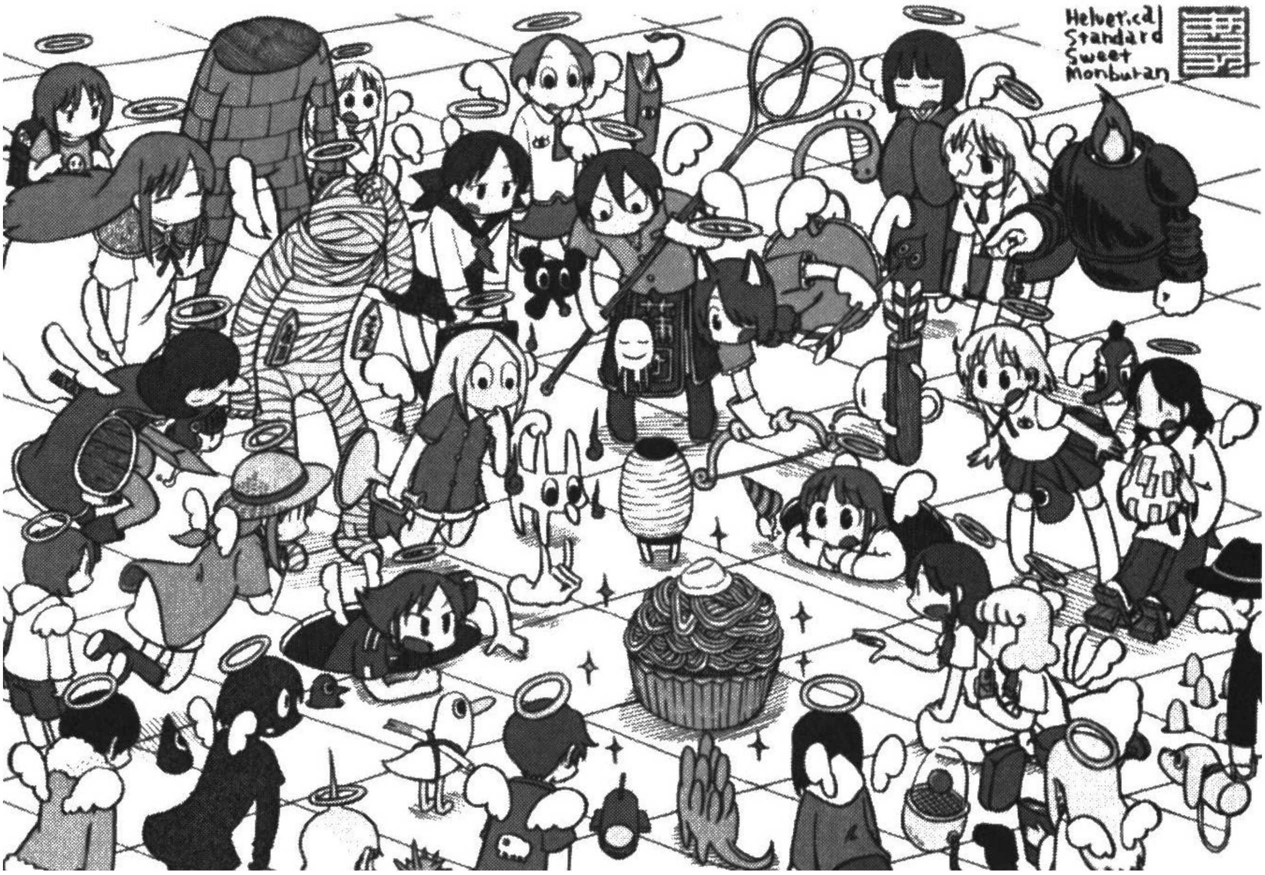


Illustration from *Monthly Newtype* Creator's Calendar 2015-2016 (January 2015 supplement). In this illustration, people in various attire are given angel halos and wings. Mysterious creatures surround them, and everyone gazes curiously at a Mont Blanc cake. The same message seen in the final scene of *Shiawase no Kakudo* and the Mechatro WeGo’s Heaven—that humans, angels, and all beings can be happy if they have something delicious—is evident here. A space where various people gather, all captivated by a sweet cake: this was Arawi's vision of Heaven.

First Manga, First Comitia Exhibition

Let's recap the process and themes of *Shiawase no Kakudo*.

Arawi first created angel Pino and the mysterious entity Sankaku, establishing the dynamic where Pino's innocent actions constantly flustered Sankaku. He then conceived a world where angels are tasked with transporting the souls of the dead to the celestial realm and are paid a wage for their work. The main plot revolved around the unmotivated Pino living in poverty with Sankaku.

The title, *Shiawase no Kakudo*, was founded on the idea that one's assessment of happiness or unhappiness changes simply by altering one's angle of thinking. The story concludes with Pino and her companions smiling as they eat delicious biscuits. Despite being penniless, Pino and her friends were able to appreciate simple happiness.

Furthermore, by presenting the world through the angels' perspective, the work managed to handle the subject of human death without becoming dark, resulting in an interpretation as a pop work.

Finally, let's look at Arawi's first participation in Comitia 63. The manuscript for *Shiawase no Kakudo* was completed just two days before the event (February 21). Although it was mostly finished on the 18th, he decided on the 19th, "I really want to get better. I think I'll push myself a little more," and revised and added to the work [11].

Having finally completed his first original work, Arawi still had a significant concern: he had no idea how many copies of his manga to prepare for the exhibition.

Six months prior, when he first learned about Comitia, Arawi wanted to print as many copies as possible to hand out to many people. However, the acquaintance who told him about the event poured cold water on his enthusiasm, warning him that original manga works don't sell.

While the acquaintance's opinion was harsh, it was generally true. There was a high probability that even a work he thought was good might not be picked up by anyone. Because the acquaintance's opinion had merit, he wrestled with the decision of how many copies to print.

Ultimately, Arawi decided to print thirty copies of *Shiawase no Kakudo* and headed to Comitia [12]. He figured he could sell any leftovers online, preparing a slightly higher print run than most unknown newcomers.

On February 23, filled with anxiety, he went to the event venue, Tokyo Big Sight. It was his first self-published manga and his first exhibition. He later recalled that the lack of any familiar faces left him uneasy and pessimistic.

> ***My goal is 10 copies...***
> ***Expectation is the mother of disappointment...*** [13]
> ***I should stop thinking now...***
>
> ***I'll burn them...***
> ***I'll burn the unsold books***
> ***and dance alone beside the fire.***
> ***Then I'll weep quietly.***
> ***I'll put out the fire with those tears.***
> ***That would be the greatest repose for this book...***
> [From "Comitia" included in *Jibun-tachi no Comitia* (自分たちのコミティア, "Our Comitia")]

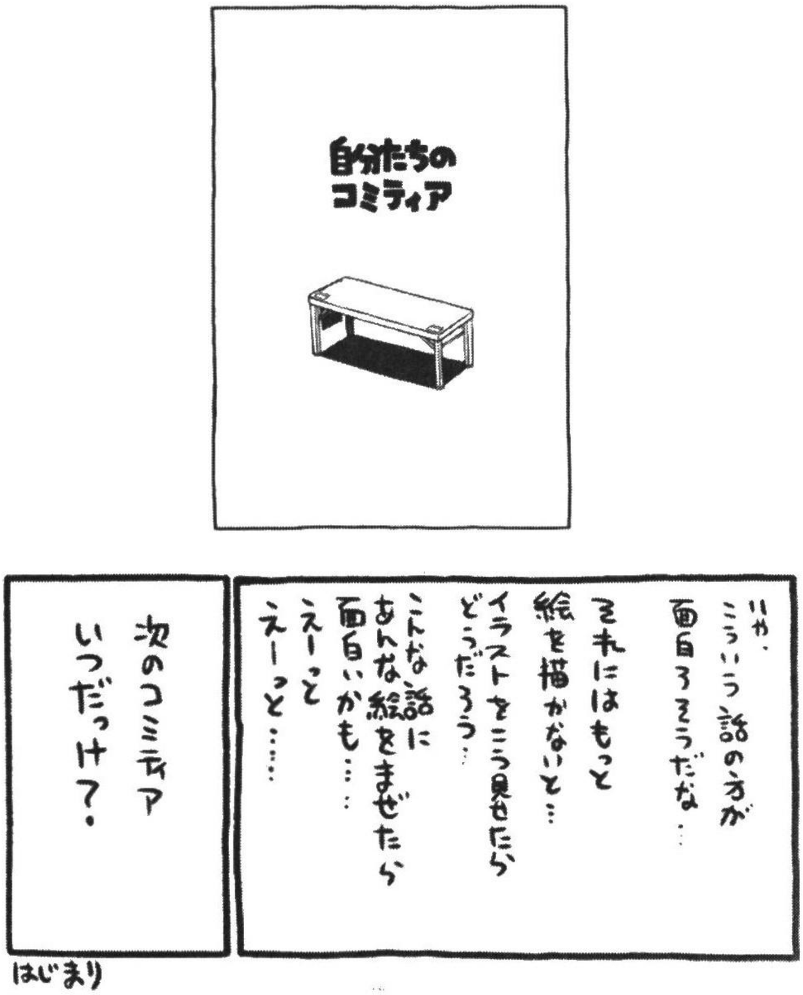
However, once Comitia began, something unexpected happened. *Shiawase no Kakudo* sold out in just 43 minutes, and the 120 hastily made flyers also sold [14]. Watching his books disappear so quickly, a whirlwind of emotions swept over Arawi.

> ***The thought of my original work being seen by people was exciting. That's why I was so keen on starting a circle activity with the acquaintance who told me about Comitia. But the acquaintance wasn't very enthusiastic and even warned me about the difficulty of selling original work.***
> ***I felt my initial enthusiasm was dampened, but I decided to go scouting at Comitia anyway. I was completely overwhelmed by the energy of the venue. Fuel was added to my passion for drawing manga, and I frantically completed Shiawase no Kakudo.***
> ***I struggled with the print run but ended up printing 30 copies of the copybook. I intended to make a lot, thinking I could sell any leftovers online. But when I opened the table, everything sold out in about an hour. In that moment, happiness, triumph, and sudden anticlimax all rushed over me at once. It was a strange feeling.***
> [From an interview for this book]

In the essay manga "Comitia," published in the anthology *Jibun-tachi no Comitia* [15], Arawi recounts his memories of participating in Comitia 63. What's interesting is his recollection of being hit by "a different kind of excitement" immediately after the sale of *Shiawase no Kakudo* ended and the rush of emotions subsided. That feeling was the eagerness to draw his next manga as soon as possible.

Arawi had finished one manga and successfully distributed his work at the venue. However, when looking toward his future as a manga artist, this day was not an end, but a beginning. By not being satisfied with just one manga and immediately starting to plan the next one for the following Comitia, he took his first genuine step toward becoming a professional manga artist.

Following the publication of *Shiawase no Kakudo*, he immersed himself even more deeply in drawing manga and would continue to release new works energetically.


自分たちのコミティア
いや、こういう話の方が面白そうだな……
それにはもっと絵を描かないと……
イラストをこう見せたらどうだろう……
こんな話にあんな絵をまぜたら面白いかも……
えーっと
えーっと……
次のコミティアいつだっけ？
はじまり

Top: *Jibun-tachi no Comitia* Cover. Arawi contributed the cover illustration and an 8-page manga titled "Comitia," which reflected on his memories of distributing *Shiawase no Kakudo*, to this anthology. Bottom: From page 12 of *Jibun-tachi no Comitia*. Manga often conclude with the annotation "Oshimai" or "Owari" (Both mean "The End"). However, Arawi subverted this convention by writing "はじまり" (Hajimari, "Beginning") at the end of his essay manga. He used this distinctive method to express his own start on the path of a manga artist.

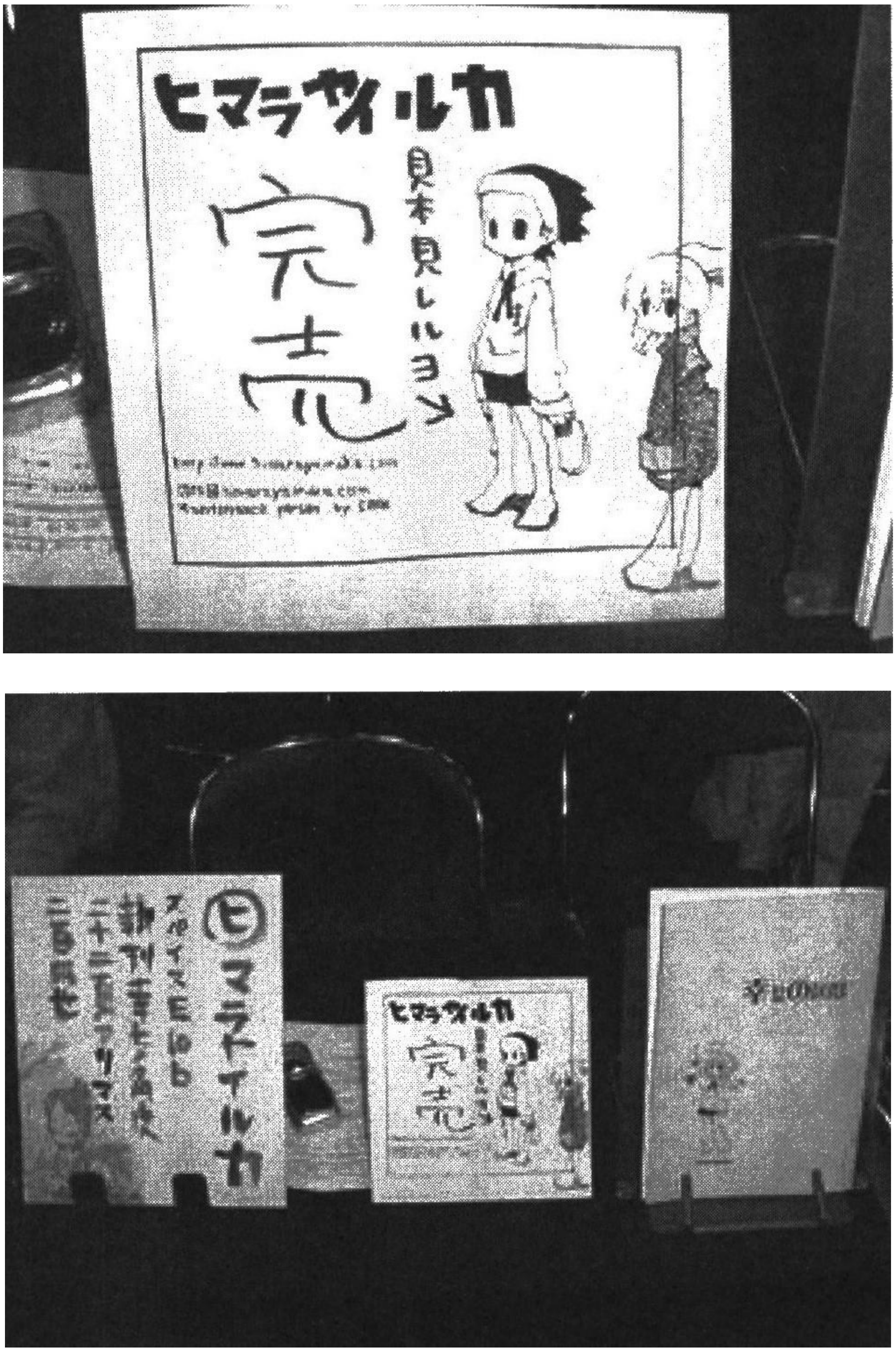

ヒマラヤイルカ
見本見レルヨ→
完売
ヒマラヤイルカ
スペースE16b

Photo posted on Himarayairuka, February 23, 2003. A picture of the circle space taken during Comitia 63.

---

[1]. See Himarayairuka, January 11, 2003.

[2]. According to Himarayairuka, February 9, 2003, Arawi went to Tokyu Hands and bought a wooden, cone-shaped object. He likely bought it as a reference for drawing Sankaku. "Bought a wooden cone at Hands. It cost 800 yen, but the form is quite good, so I'll allow it."

[3]. Initially, there was a plan for a Grim Reaper and a Manga Artist to appear as third and fourth characters. See Himarayairuka, January 19, 2003, "Initial Plot for February Manga ~ Katabashira" (2月の漫画への初期プロット〜肩柱): "Hoping it will be... a 16-page comic depicting the daily lives of an Angel, a Grim Reaper, and a Manga Artist..." However, at the plotting stage, he seems to have decided the story would become unwieldy, as the roles of the Grim Reaper and Manga Artist were cut, and the characters were limited to angels.

[4]. The designation of Yuki as a Second Class Angel is thought to be taken from Shōtarō Ishinomori's debut work, *Nikyū Tenshi* (二級天使, "Second Class Angel"). However, there is a difference: Ishinomori's Second Class Angel, Pinta, has no wings and helps living humans, whereas Yuki already has wings and transports the dead to the celestial realm.

[5]. The existence of the Heavenly Dispatch can also be confirmed in the illustration "Nenmatsu Boke" (年末ボケ, "Year-End Fog") released on Twitter on December 29, 2012. This illustration, which shows an angel resting on a cloud-shaped sofa, features a book titled "Tengoku-okuri" being read by the angel.

[6]. This is the subtitle added when the collected edition *Sasameyuki* was reprinted.

[7]. See Himarayairuka, February 15, 2003.

[8]. Arawi consistently wrote on the colophon of his self-published manga: "May the 45 degrees of happiness be with all those who picked up this book." This phrase contained a prayer that everyone should be happy.

[9]. See Himarayairuka, February 17, 2003.

[10]. According to Himarayairuka, "Promotional Trailer" (番宣), February 3, 2003, Arawi was planning to create and display a large, enlarged poster of the "Tabekko Dōbutsu" biscuit package for his Comitia 63 exhibit. "Trying to come up with an idea for a slightly larger poster to display at the circle booth. Drawing my own art is too obvious and boring, so I'll take a photo and go the artistic route. Since the manga I'm drawing now has a brief 'Tabekko Dōbutsu' reference, I took a digital photo of it and made a mock-up poster. It turned out unexpectedly cool. It's awesome, 'Tabekko Dōbutsu' is awesome!! I guess I'll be the only person to put up a poster like this and buy the book." However, it appears he did not actually display the poster.

[11]. See Himarayairuka, February 19, 2003.

[12]. The essay manga "Comitia" states that he printed 50 copies, but this is thought to be a slip of memory.

[13]. The quote "Expectation is the mother of disappointment" comes from musician Eiichi Ohtaki. Arawi spoke of his deep admiration for Ohtaki in the feature "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs." Incidentally, Ohtaki was a founding member of Happy End with Haruomi Hosono and others. Ohtaki's quote was an unexpectedly fitting reference for the essay manga detailing the events leading up to the publication of *Shiawase no Kakudo*.

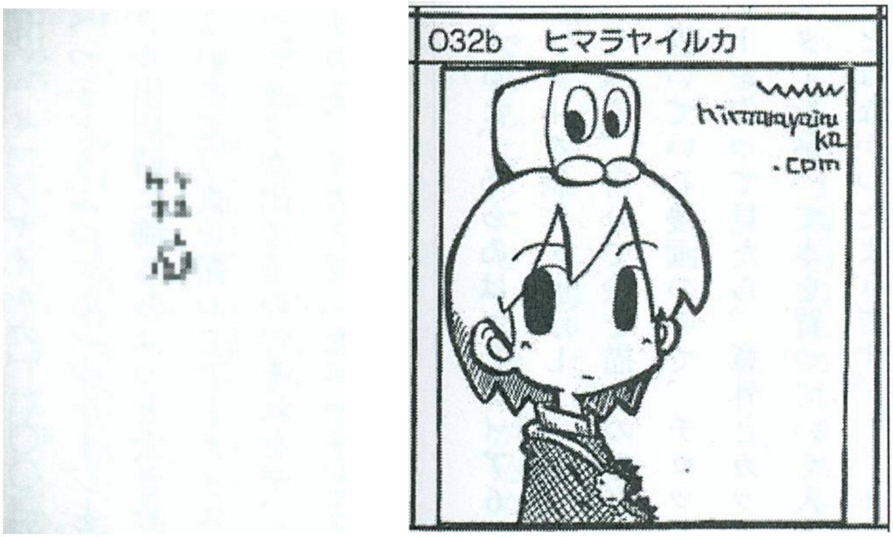
[14]. See Himarayairuka, February 23, 2003. "Sold out 43 minutes after opening. Thank you. & 120 flyers were given out. I am grateful to everyone who came. I was also very nervous about my first sketchbook."

[15]. An anthology dōjinshi organized by Arawi's friend Sawada and published at Comitia 134 (held in November 2020). It was compiled on the theme of participants rethinking the significance of Comitia following the cancellation of the previous two events due to the COVID-19 pandemic that raged worldwide in 2020.

Mental World and the "Self-Philosophical" #1: *Hakoniwa* (May 2003)

Hakoniwa (箱庭, "Miniature Garden")

- May 5, 2003, at Comitia 64 (Circle Space O32b)
- Copybook (photocopied), B5 size, 20 pages total, Circle Name: Himarayairuka, Byline: Cork



Left: *Hakoniwa* cover (Clear cover photo unavailable).
Right: Himarayairuka Circle Cut published in *Tia's Magazine 64*. Features the tengu trainee Nantonaku and Hako-kun.

Encounter and Influence of *Monthly Manga Garo*

On May 5, 2003, Arawi participated in Comitia 64 and debuted his second self-published manga, *Hakoniwa*. This work was quite arcane, resulting in a narrative that's not easily grasped.

While Arawi's previous work, *Shiawase no Kakudo*, contained several themes, the world-setting—angels guiding the souls of the dead to the celestial realm—was clearly presented. *Hakoniwa*, conversely, develops as a young girl encounters a series of absurd events, making the story difficult to summarize. The fact that the setting is a space reflecting the girl's own mental world also raises the bar for interpretation.

So, why did *Hakoniwa* employ absurd narratives and the subject of the mental world? There are two main reasons. Let's first look at the influence of the avant-garde works Arawi encountered after the publication of *Shiawase no Kakudo*.

After publishing *Shiawase no Kakudo*, Arawi felt a strong desire to draw his next manga but struggled to consolidate his ideas. It was at this time that he was deeply impressed by the manga published in the magazine *Monthly Manga Garo*.

Since its founding in 1964, *Garo* fostered a free editorial environment and launched the careers of many avant-garde and highly individualistic manga artists. During this period, Arawi bought up back issues of *Garo*—specifically those published around 1977, his birth year—at used bookstores and was struck by the collection of works that defied popular trends [1].

One work that particularly caught his attention was the manga *Penguin Gohan* (ペンギンごはん, "Penguin Rice"), which began serialization in 1976. This work, with its primitive art style and absurd, violent world, was originally authored by Shigesato Itoi, whom Arawi had been obsessed with in the past.

Reconnecting with Itoi's work made Arawi feel a desire to expand his imagination more freely regarding manga expression. He therefore set a new direction: to publish an experimental work himself at the next Comitia.

Following this decision, Itoi's statement about *Penguin Gohan* was quoted on Himarayairuka as a declaration of Arawi's resolve [2].

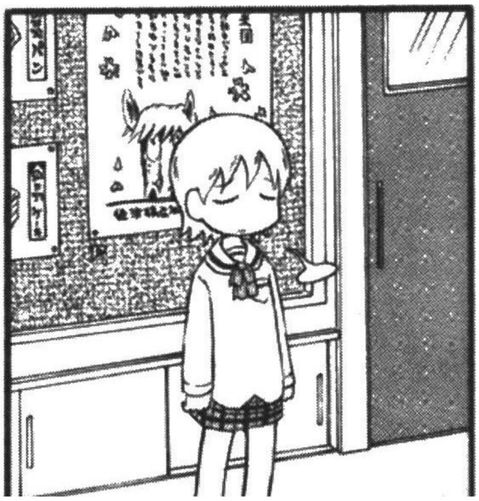
> ***No matter what people say, you have something secret that allows you to say, "I am amazing." If you lose that, you won't be able to move, will you?***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Excerpted Projection" (抜他投影), April 23, 2003]

Arawi also turned his attention to artist Genpei Akasegawa, who had connections with Itoi. Akasegawa was one of the artists who published avant-garde manga in Garo during the 1970s, establishing his own unique artistic world.

> ***I read Genpei Akasegawa's manga. It's honestly quite interesting.***
> ***I sincerely wish I could read more of his works.***
> [From Himarayairuka, March 26, 2003]

Akasegawa's series in *Garo* was called the *Chōkagaku Kamishibai* (超科学紙芝居, "Superscientific Picture Show") series. While these works were presented in the format of an essay manga with Akasegawa himself as the protagonist, they did not chronicle actual events. Instead, they depicted the artist venturing into pathological megalomania or chronicled preposterous occurrences that were clearly fictional.

As mentioned earlier, *Hakoniwa* is a story about a girl experiencing absurdities within a world modeled after her own psyche. There is little doubt that the work was inspired by Akasegawa's depiction of a world resembling a waking dream. All of Arawi's subsequent manga set in a mental world can be traced back to *Chōkagaku Kamishibai* as their origin.



From *Nichijou* Volume 1, page 149: A poster on the bulletin board behind the characters mimics Genpei Akasegawa's manga, *Sakura Gahō* (櫻画報, "Sakura Illustrated"). Incidentally, upon hearing the news of Akasegawa's passing on October 27, 2014, Arawi paid tribute by posting this panel, which contained the Akasegawa manga as an Easter egg, on Twitter.

Furthermore, *Hakoniwa* contains a direct homage to one episode within *Chōkagaku Kamishibai*, "Zero Kaiten no Untenshu" (零回転の運転手, "The Driver of Zero Revolution").

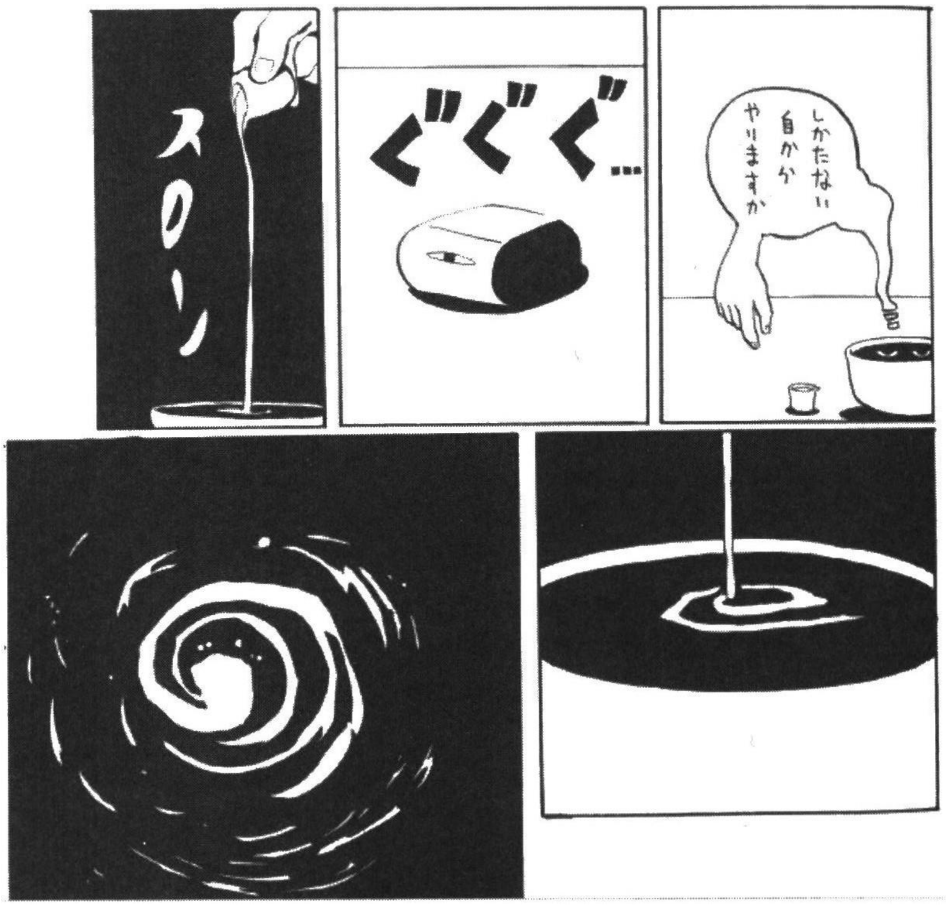
That story begins with a poetic monologue, likening the spiral pattern formed when milk is poured into coffee to a galaxy, stating, "I drink the Andromeda galaxy, one cup every morning." From there, the protagonist (Akasegawa) develops a delusion that he has countless galaxies floating inside his body, forming a small universe.

Hakoniwa also features coffee being poured into a mug. When milk is added, the swirling pattern on the surface reflects an alternate world where strange creatures cluster.

This depiction, seemingly absurd at first, is easily interpreted when viewed in light of "Zero Kaiten no Untenshu." Arawi was likely also likening the swirling pattern to a galaxy, creating the effect that the creatures inhabiting those stars were being reflected in the coffee. The alternate world reflected in the coffee was an expression that evolved from Akasegawa's manga.

In addition, *Hakoniwa* uses the unique onomatopoeia "スロン" ("Suron") when pouring milk into the coffee, which is also an homage. "Zero Kaiten no Untenshu" not only uses "スロン" as the onomatopoeia for pouring milk but also includes a marginal note specifically stating that "スロン" is the sound of adding milk. Therefore, this onomatopoeic match is not a coincidence [3].

While Arawi was inspired by Itoi's *Penguin Gohan*, that influence was limited to his overall direction of wanting to draw manga with free imagination. In contrast, Akasegawa's *Chōkagaku Kamishibai* is notable for marking its strong impression through direct homage.


しかたない
自分が
やりますか
ぐぐぐ…
スロン

From *Hakoniwa*, page 6: In the strange world where the coffee begins to speak, the onomatopoeia "スロン" (Suron) is used for pouring milk.

The Birth of the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga"

In the process of reading *Monthly Manga Garo*, Arawi re-encountered Shigesato Itoi's work and was deeply impressed by Genpei Akasegawa's manga. The influence of *Chōkagaku Kamishibai* was particularly significant, and Akasegawa's presence can be seen at the root of Arawi's manga after *Hakoniwa*.

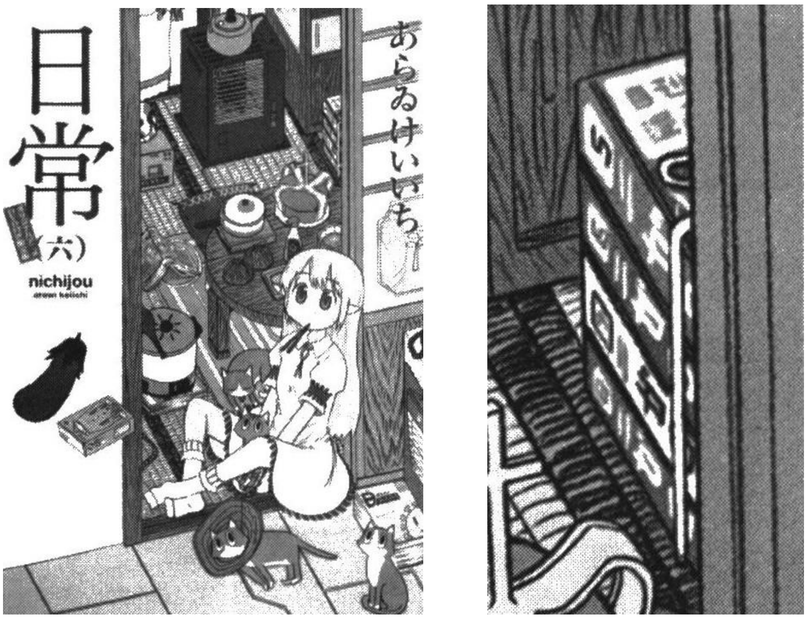


Illustration from the limited edition cover of *Nichijou* Volume 6: A magazine resembling *Monthly Manga Garo* is placed in the background. Based on the design and color scheme, it is believed to be modeled after the April–June and August 1966 issues of *Garo*.

However, *Hakoniwa* likely wouldn't have been completed solely with the inspiration from Akasegawa's manga. The depiction of a world modeled after a mental world had a second catalyst: Arawi was also influenced by prose books—works of non-fiction he hadn't actively read until then.

Inspired by *Chōkagaku Kamishibai*, Arawi wanted to read more of Akasegawa's manga. But because Akasegawa was primarily active as an avant-garde artist and was not prolific in manga, Arawi instead picked up the prose books *Rōjin-ryoku* (老人力, "Old Man Power") and *Chōgeijutsu Thomason* (超芸術トマソン, "Hyperart Thomason").

Rōjin-ryoku was a humorous essay that actively affirmed human decline, rephrasing aging phenomena normally avoided as simply having acquired "Old Man Power." Chōgeijutsu Thomason was a reportage that re-evaluated useless real estate by interpreting buildings or remnants with unclear functions as "Hyperart," or "Thomason."

These books by Akasegawa also matched Arawi's taste, primarily because the theme of "attributing value to the useless and meaningless" was very similar to Itoi's *Manryū Copy-juku*. Finding a similarity to the work of the figure he loved, Itoi, made Arawi appreciate Akasegawa even more.

While these works lack the direct homage seen in *Chōkagaku Kamishibai*, *Rōjin-ryoku* and *Chōgeijutsu Thomason* were also two crucial books in shaping his identity as a manga artist.

> ***I went to the bookstore to pick up Genpei Akasegawa's Chōgeijutsu Thomason that I had ordered. His writing, or rather, his way of thinking is fascinating.***
> ***It's somewhat close to Shigesato Itoi's style, I think. Anyway, it's interesting.***
> ***Well, as for the story of the license and the horns: it feels great to pioneer things on your own. In that regard, I feel that both men's influence on me is so immense that it causes a chamber in my heart to expand.***
> [From Himarayairuka, April 12, 2003]

Arawi had not actively read prose books composed only of text until this point.

When he picked up *Rōjin-ryoku*, he mentioned that while he usually "doesn't read much text," he found the book amusing. Although he was familiar with Shin'ichi Hoshi in his student days and later read novels by Hiroshi Mori and Edogawa Ranpo as an adult, he still felt he wasn't adept at reading prose [4].

However, from the time he started reading Akasegawa's prose, he began reading many text-based books, even reaching for the works of literary figures active from the Meiji to Showa periods, such as Tōson Shimazaki, Sōseki Natsume, and Jun'ichirō Tanizaki [5]. It was these so-called "pure literature" novels by Japanese authors that became the decisive factor in him drawing manga set in a mental world.

> ***The first things I published at Comitia (an exhibition for original dōjinshi) were all about the mental world. The titles were things like Kokoro and Sasameyuki, clearly pure literature (laughs). I like pure literature because it often doesn't have a punchline, so I read it a lot.***
> [From *Studio Voice*, "Keiichi Arawi: Off-the-Charts, Otherworldly Creativity!," January 2008 issue]

> ***Looking back on that time, I think I was drawn to the non-fictionality of pure literature. I was probably devouring the works of these so-called literary masters with the feeling of peeking into someone else's diary. I also thought that if you changed the name from "literature," which sounds difficult, to "funny diary," more people would read it.*** [From an interview for this book]

Arawi viewed pure literature novels as the authors' "funny diaries." In other words, his interest in the novel was primarily focused on the author's inner world as explored through the act of writing.

It's likely that as an extension of this idea, he wanted to create this pure literature = funny diary in the form of a manga. He thought, "I want to convey my inner self through the filter of manga," and began conceptualizing his next Comitia work.

> ***The concept for the manga around this time was something like, "Conveying what I'm thinking through the filter called manga," and if you look back at Sasameyuki (a collection of self-published manga), the individual characters quite remarkably don't have names. It really is being treated as a filter. Like, right? Well, whatever.*** [From Himarayairuka, April 12, 2003]

Hakoniwa refers to Akasegawa's manga and is structured as an absurd narrative. However, Arawi was not merely aiming for expressive humor or drawing a nonsensical manga.

He had a strong desire to express something to the reader, much like the way pure literature novels deeply explored the narrator's inner world. But he felt he couldn't express it well in a conventional format. Therefore, he set up a special worldview—the mental world—and attempted to express the depths of his own mind within the work.

Arawi dubbed this genre of manga, beginning with *Hakoniwa*, the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga."

> ***Those who have seen Himaraya's manga until now probably understand.***
> ***It is completely a "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga."*** [From Himarayairuka, April 12, 2003]

True to its philosophical claim, *Hakoniwa* depicts an absurd world while incorporating a large amount of Arawi's own insights. The reason for adding "self" to philosophy is likely a combination of the subject of investigation being his own inner self and his attempt to derive a personal solution through self-questioning.

Drawing Manga as Sandplay Therapy

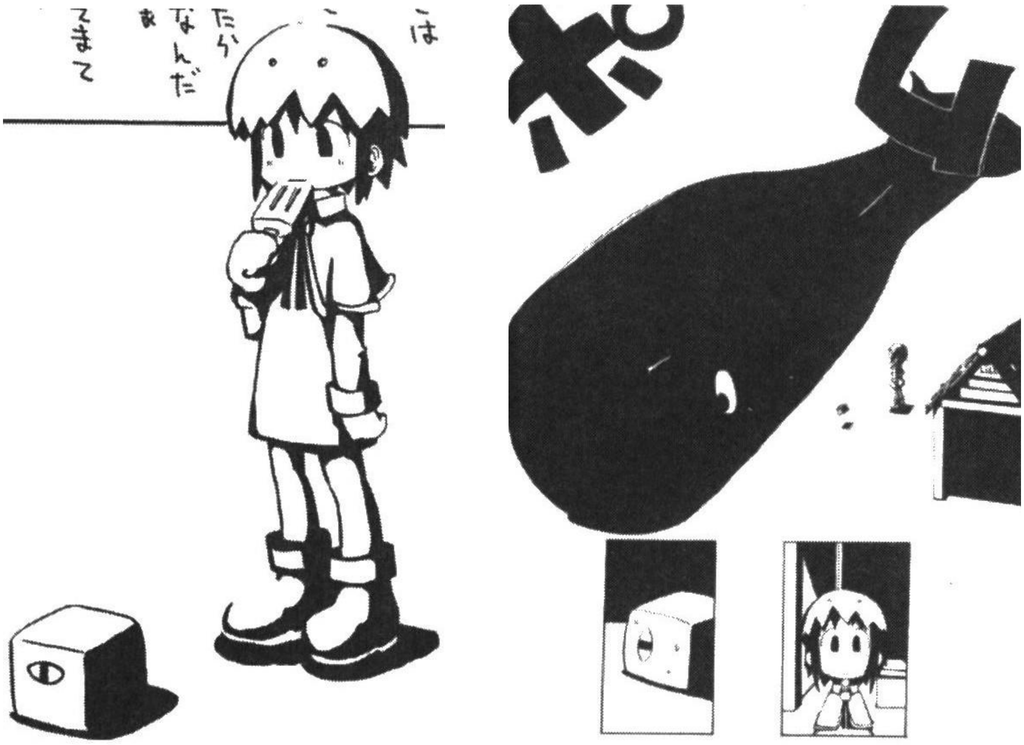
The intersection of Akasegawa's manga world and Japanese literary novels formed the foundation for the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga." Driven to convey his own thoughts and feelings, Arawi began weaving the narrative of *Hakoniwa*.

To interpret this work, let's analyze the characters and the plot to understand the "self-philosophy" expressed within.

The main characters are a girl wearing something like an eggshell on her head and a conscious box (both are unnamed). The box is a cube with a single eye, extending the design of Hakonome from "Futsū-chan" and Sankaku from *Shiawase no Kakudo*. The setting where the box serves the girl is also shared with *Shiawase no Kakudo*, where Sankaku was Pino's overseer.

The story is driven by the box's supernatural power. The box possesses the bizarre ability to create anything the girl wishes for. The girl, in turn, has the box create a giant miniature garden (hakoniwa) where nothing else exists, and she withdraws into it. She issues a continuous stream of selfish wishes, commanding the box to materialize various objects.

However, the box's abilities seem imperfect; it only creates items that deviate from her wishes, such as a giant whale or coffee. The girl, frustrated, resorts to kicking the box—this forms the first half of *Hakoniwa*. While the scale of the story has grown, the core dynamic of a free-spirited girl bossing around a pitiful mascot character is inherited from the previous work.



Left: From *Hakoniwa*, page 5: The girl and the box. The girl's design, wearing an eggshell on her head, might symbolize "being confined in her own shell," given her setting of withdrawing into the miniature garden created by the box.
Right: From *Hakoniwa*, page 3: The scene where a giant whale is summoned into the empty space, contrary to the girl's wish.

Arawi was determined to draw a "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" when writing this work. If so, the figures of the girl and the box that can create anything must symbolize the artist's own thought process in some way. What do they represent?

The key to this mystery lies in the title, *Hakoniwa* [6]. If the work is derived from "Hakoniwa Ryōhō" (箱庭療法, "Sandplay Therapy" or "Sand-tray Therapy"), the positions of the girl and the box can be interpreted naturally.

Sandplay Therapy is a form of psychotherapy where a subject freely arranges miniature figures within a small box of sand to represent a world. By investing their feelings into the world within the sand-tray, subjects can share their inner emotions that they cannot articulate through words.

This therapy resonated with Arawi's intent to express his inner thoughts through manga. That is why the story of *Hakoniwa*—where the box exercises a strange power in an empty space, causing eccentric objects to appear—perfectly mirrors the process of sandplay therapy.

Extrapolating from this, the girl can be seen as a symbol of the therapy subject, and the box that can create anything as an analogy for the imagination the subject employs when creating the sand-tray world. More specifically, the girl can be viewed as a projection of Arawi himself, and the work essentially comics the artist's attempt to explore his inner world through the process of sandplay therapy.

The sandplay therapy-like worldview of *Hakoniwa* can also be interpreted from another angle. Arawi once revealed a perception on his website that "everything other than oneself is a fantasy created by oneself." This is an expression of solipsism, the idea that the world doesn't exist before oneself, but rather appears within one's own consciousness precisely because one observes it.

> ***Ultimately, only oneself exists, and everything other than oneself is a fantasy created by oneself, and that the current self is the final fantasy toward the end of all things! Or some kind of solipsistic thought like that, which makes the waiting train arrive in no time theory or whatever.*** [From kumomadori blog, "The Wagtail's Clap and the Accidental Episode" (鶺鴒の拍手と偶然の挿話), September 24, 2006]

The girl in *Hakoniwa* wishes to the box to bring forth various objects into the miniature garden space. Conversely, this implies that if the girl were not there, no objects would exist. Therefore, Arawi's solipsistic perception fundamentally aligns with the world created by the girl in *Hakoniwa*. Both share the commonality that the surrounding world manifests by one's own hand placing images within it.

In that sense, *Hakoniwa* was an allegory with sandplay therapy as its motif, and an embodiment of the philosophy that "everything other than oneself is a fantasy created by oneself."

The Reclusive Girl and the Session with Others

In drawing *Hakoniwa*, Arawi successfully made a manga out of sandplay therapy and expressed his own solipsistic worldview.

What makes this particularly interesting, however, is that simple solipsism cannot fully explain Arawi's perception of reality. During the creation of *Hakoniwa*, he shared the solipsistic idea on Himarayairuka that "the world is ultimately created inside oneself." Yet, in a contradictory realization, he also noted that there are "small changes while being affected in no small measure by the surroundings."

> ***The world is ultimately created inside oneself.***
> ***Although not that subjectivist.***
> ***The utopia one desires is within oneself.***
> ***But there is no right answer.***
> ***No, one decides the right answer for oneself, but the moment one arrives at the right answer, the "right answer" ceases to be the "right answer," I feel.***
> ***There are small changes, while being affected in no small measure by the surroundings.***
> ***One's only confidant is oneself, one's only consultant is oneself, and the final decision-maker is oneself.***
> ***The surroundings that hold a small degree of influence over the "entirety."***
> ***When one realizes that everything visible to oneself is the "surroundings," is one's own existence recognized by oneself?***
> [From Himarayairuka, "New Work" (新作), April 15, 2003]

This passage asserts that the power of decision in reality rests with oneself, yet simultaneously records the contradictory realization that one's subjective view is not static but constantly affected by external influence.

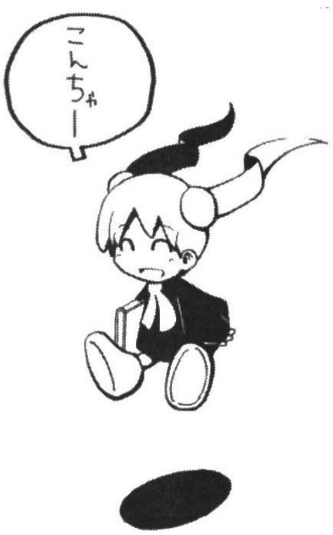
For Arawi, the world before him should have been nothing more than a "fantasy" generated by his own mind. Just as the girl in *Hakoniwa* created all sorts of objects in an empty miniature garden through the box.

However, based on his life experiences, he also felt that reality was too substantial to be dismissed entirely as a mere brain image. The honest realization was that the influence from his surroundings could not be ignored, and he was shaped by countless events and people.

This ambivalent thought—intellectually embracing solipsism while instinctively believing in the complete opposite, an "other-centric" view—allows us to interpret the latter half of the work.

Midway through *Hakoniwa*, a third character, a young girl calling herself a "Bukken-shi" (物件士, "Property Agent"), appears abruptly. Since the miniature garden space where the girl is withdrawn should contain nothing and no one except the objects created by the box, the intrusion of the Property Agent, who was not created by the box, is an anomaly. The girl finds this uninvited visitor suspicious, but the Property Agent, disregarding the girl's feelings, begins her own business: door-to-door sales.

If the scenery created by the girl's wishes to the box is a metaphor for sandplay therapy and solipsism, the Property Agent symbolizes the Other—an entity not subject to the girl's self-consciousness. The girl in the story was supposed to be in a world where "everything other than oneself is a fantasy created by oneself," yet her existence is unexpectedly invaded by an unknown person. Hakoniwa seems to directly reflect Arawi's own thought process, where he intellectually entertained solipsism but instinctively could not ignore the existence of others.



From *Hakoniwa*, page 9: A young girl, a "Property Agent," who intrudes into the girl's world.

The girl in the work completely ignores the Property Agent, this totally unforeseen presence. The Property Agent desperately attempts to continue her sales pitch, but the girl persistently refuses to engage, and they ultimately fail to communicate.

Fundamentally, sandplay therapy is a psychological technique for subjects who find it difficult to express their feelings to convey their thoughts. It was probably inherently difficult for the girl, the symbol of that process, to converse with another person using words. Nevertheless, even in the form of shunning the Property Agent, the girl was certainly engaging in an interaction with the Other.

While contemplating solipsism and drawing *Hakoniwa*, Arawi ran into the existence of the Other, an entity outside his control. That is why the story shifts dramatically from the first half, where the girl was alone wishing for things from the box, to the second half, where she is spoken to by the Property Agent and decides to ignore her.

Incidentally, *Hakoniwa* is subtitled Session in the different world. "The different world" is undoubtedly the setting modeled on sandplay therapy. "Session" means an improvised performance by multiple musicians, or a meeting/conference.

Even if one withdraws into a personal world modeled after sandplay therapy, one still has to deal with the Other, like the Property Agent, who appears from nowhere. Whether she wants to or not, the girl cannot live without awkwardly having a "session" with others, even in a world different from reality. This was the view presented by *Hakoniwa*.

Deepening Philosophy and Hitting the Wall of Isolation

Before beginning work on *Hakoniwa*, Arawi left an intriguing sentence, poetically defining the manga's theme as "how to see a lovely rose."

> ***Thinking about it that way,***
> ***I guess it's about "how to see a lovely rose." A manga like that.***
> ***"No way!!?"***
> [From Himarayairuka, April 15, 2003]

The phrase, "how to see a lovely rose," alludes to Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* [7]. In the novel, the Prince from another planet speaks of a single rose he left behind on his homeworld. Although it was just one of many roses, it felt uniquely special. The explanation given is that this specialness lay in the Prince's own consciousness, having watched over the rose for so long. The Prince himself had endowed that seemingly ordinary rose with a special brilliance.

The Prince's friend, the Fox, explains: "It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important." And, "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye [8]." This passage must have deeply resonated with Arawi as he contemplated the nature of the self and the other.

So, what was the "lovely rose" Arawi was seeking to see? It is likely a reference to his favorite things. Arawi was inspired and influenced by finding things to love in various subjects. Yet, as *The Little Prince* states, this love "is only with the heart that one can see rightly." Therefore, by delving into his inner self through the creation of *Hakoniwa*, he aimed to identify the things he loved most.

However, what he actually found through *Hakoniwa* was not the "lovely rose," but the two characters of isolation. Just like the writers of pure literature he was reading, his intense self-scrutiny led to a feeling of solitude and an inability to connect with others.

The girl in *Hakoniwa* refused the Property Agent's sales pitch. It is highly suggestive that the item the Property Agent was trying to sell was a sliding door that allowed exit from the miniature garden space. If the girl had successfully communicated with the Property Agent and acquired the door, she would have left her current location and stepped into the outer world crowded with others.

Instead, the girl lacked the courage and couldn't exchange words with the Property Agent. The Property Agent persistently tried to talk to the girl, who stubbornly refused, but eventually gave up and left. It is easy to interpret this entire sequence as an expression of the girl ≈ Arawi's inability to connect well with others.

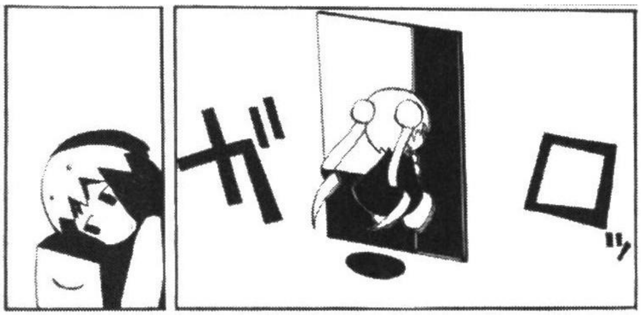
In the climax of the story, the girl watches the departing Property Agent with a complex expression. While annoyed by the presence of the Other, she was also disgusted with her inability to accept them.

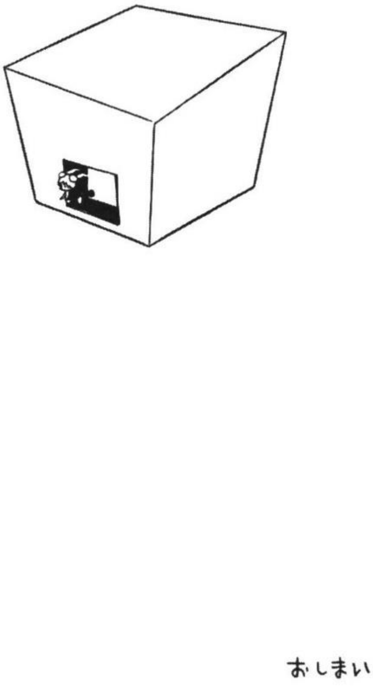
The moment the Property Agent exits the miniature garden space, a surprising fact is revealed: the space the girl wished for and the box created was, to other people, only the size of a small shed. Though it felt immeasurably vast from the inside, it was not significant in size at all.

It is also revealed that whatever the girl imagined or the box created had no effect on the outside world. This ending depicts the irony that just as the girl continually ignored the Property Agent, the outside world paid no attention to the girl.

What is emphasized at the end of *Hakoniwa* is the narrowness of the space created by the box and the insignificance of the girl. No matter how egoistical her actions were within the miniature garden, now that the fact of her withdrawal into a small space has been exposed, the sense of emptiness only grows.

This depiction brings the girl's isolation into sharp relief, revealing the work's conclusion that deepening one's philosophy leads to isolation.





From *Hakoniwa*. Page 12 (Top) and page 13 (Bottom).

> ***Deepening my philosophy led me to isolation, and deepening my isolation led me to a large public square.*** [From Himarayairuka, "World" (世界), September 26, 2003]

Deepening one's philosophy leads to confronting one's isolation, and delving further into that isolation reveals a "large public square." This "large public square" refers to the individual's inner mental world, and specifically the miniature garden space in *Hakoniwa*. As this passage indicates, the girl's heart was inevitably one burdened with isolation.

Thus, *Hakoniwa* concludes, leaving behind the frustration and loneliness of being unable to understand others. For Arawi's manga, this unredeemed ending, which is neither positive nor pop, is unusual.

So, what would it take for her to be saved? To find that answer, one must await the completion of the next work, *Hane*, which is the de facto sequel set in the mental world. This work would become the next step for Arawi, and for the girl of *Hakoniwa*, to break free from the isolated world of self-consciousness and reach a new theme.

Beginning to Draw Illustrations Without Outlines

As Arawi began writing *Hakoniwa*, he stated of his own work: "If you follow the story, you won't understand the meaning," and "I'm metaphorically expressing what I want to say using the technique of manga." The intent of this statement is what we confirmed earlier:

> ***Those who have seen Shiawase no Kakudo will probably understand that***
> ***my manga probably won't make sense if you just follow the story. (Though I try to make the story at least viewable.)***
> ***It's like I'm metaphorically expressing what I want to say using the technique of manga, or something. (Oh, that sounds cool.)***
> ***For example, "Title + Manga - Subtitle = Answer," or something like that. It's just an example.***
> [From Himarayairuka, March 23, 2003]

In the statement above, Arawi indicates that the three elements of the story, the main title, and the subtitle of *Hakoniwa* are essential for its interpretation. Let's briefly revisit the themes of *Hakoniwa* by referring to these three elements again.

Arawi was inspired by Akasegawa's manga and novels classified as pure literature, and conceived of creating a "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga." He envisioned a work conscious of sandplay therapy and titled it *Hakoniwa*.

The story revolved around a girl who wished upon the box's supernatural power to create various objects. Only the items created by the box existed around the girl, and the space itself was the box's creation. In the sense that only objects produced by her own consciousness existed, a solipsistic worldview was formed.

However, while Arawi intellectually contemplated solipsism, he couldn't help but feel the reality of the surroundings that had influenced him. This feeling was reflected in Hakoniwa. The girl, in her self-contained world, was perplexed by the appearance of the Property Agent—the Other. When confronted with this outsider, she failed to communicate and fell into isolation.

The story ends by revealing the insignificance of the space the girl was withdrawn into. For her to be saved after having the smallness of her world exposed, she had to wait for the completion of the next work, *Hane*.

Finally in this section, we should look at the illustrations that captivated Arawi during this period. In April–May 2003, while being greatly influenced by the avant-garde manga of *Garo* and Akasegawa, he was also fascinated by a completely different art style.

At the time, the video game *Makai Senki Disgaea* was a hot topic among game enthusiasts on the internet. Beyond the gameplay, the cute character designs by illustrator Takehito Harada were highly popular.

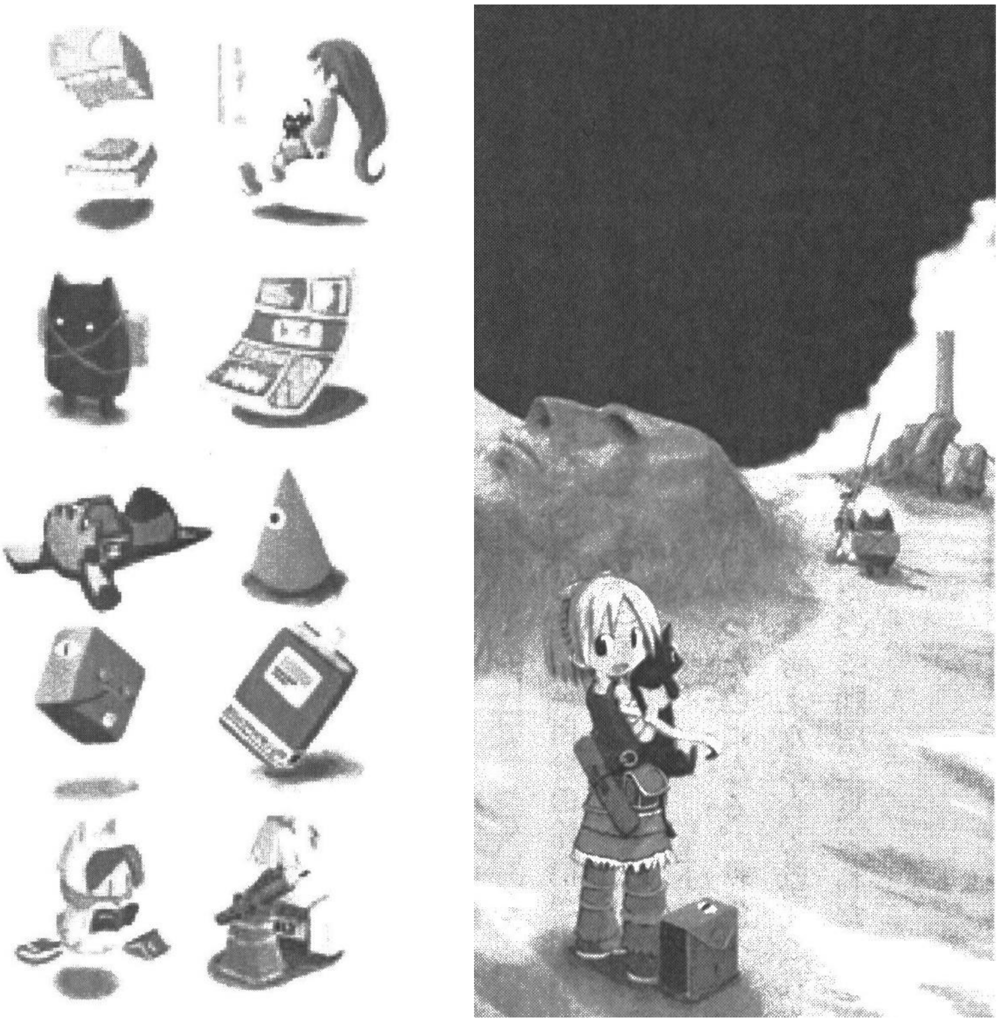
> ***(From Takehito Harada,) I think I was influenced by the "coloring" and "balance." The art style that uses no outlines with a deformed look was quite shocking. I was simultaneously shocked by Gaspard and Lisa in the same way. The expression of simplified painting done in oil paint was eye-opening at the time.*** [From an interview for this book]

Harada's influence was evident, and Arawi began to favor drawing acrylic-style color illustrations with a deformed look and no outlines.

However, Arawi rarely draws color illustrations without outlines today. This is because at a certain point, he realized that simply imitating Harada's style would not allow him to develop his own.

> ***I thought, "If I just keep drawing by copying someone else's art, it won't become my own." No matter how good the "coloring" is, the crucial drawing itself has to be good, or it means nothing. I also thought, "If my own art style develops, the appropriate coloring for that style will naturally follow."*** [From an interview for this book]

"If my own art style develops, the coloring will naturally follow the style of the drawing." Arawi decided that while dedication to color was important, he needed to solidify his own unique style even more, and he began to focus more seriously on his self-published manga than ever before. The originalistic mindset evident throughout his manga creation was once again fully expressed here.



Left: Icon illustration published on Himarayairuka around August 2003.
Right: Illustration published on Himarayairuka around August 2003. A color illustration depicting characters without outlining their contours.

---

[1]. See the comment "June Himarayairuka" in *Sasameyuki*.

[2]. The source of Itoi's statement is *Hobonichi Itoi Shinbun*, January 9, 2000, "Hitoshi Matsumoto's Incredible Mind," Episode 10. In this article, Itoi offers the comedian Hitoshi Matsumoto a copy of *Penguin Gohan* before saying the line that Arawi quoted.

[3]. The following passage is recorded in Genpei Akasegawa's *Enban Densetsu: Anoyo Made Ato Ippo* (円盤伝説 あの世まであと一歩, "Flying Saucer Legend: One Step to the Other World"), page 33: "Stir the sugar into the coffee, and Suron with the milk..." "Note: Suron = Onomatopoeia for when milk is poured into coffee in a cafe. Devised by Yukio Kawasaki."

[4]. Regarding Shin'ichi Hoshi, see annotation 2 in "Primary Experience 2" of this book. Regarding Hiroshi Mori and Edogawa Ranpo, see Himarayairuka, February 26, March 26, and March 27, 2003. A post on Helvetica Standard note, July 31, 2021, "Sitsumon Ōtō #12," also states, "I thought I'd like to read Hiroshi Mori again, whom I used to read in my 20s.

[5]. See the interview for this book.

[6]. Referring to Himarayairuka, April 6, 2003, reveals that the work was initially tentatively titled "Perfect Cube." It seems to have been retitled *Hakoniwa* from there.

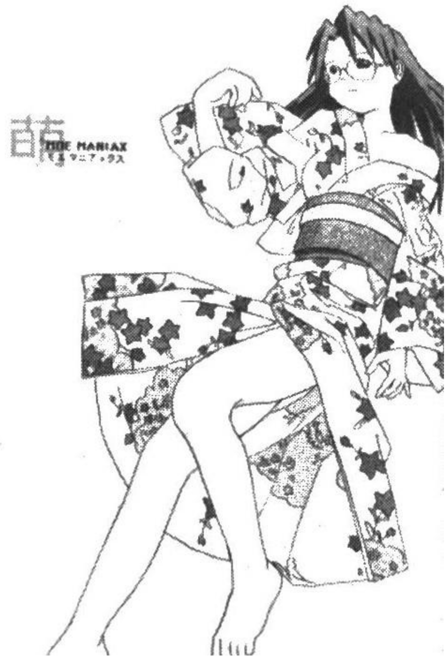
[7]. In *Nichijou* Volume 10, page 148, a character is depicted being swallowed whole by a snake. This is reminiscent of the drawing of an elephant being swallowed by the great serpent Boa (uwabami), whose existence is indicated in *The Little Prince*.

[8]. *Ano Toki no Ōji-kun* (あのときの王子くん, "The Prince of That Time") is the retitled Japanese translation of *The Little Prince*. While this translation captures the nuance of the original title, this text uses the more widely recognized title, *Hoshi no Ōji-sama* (The Little Prince), for consistency.

The Joy of Playing with Manga Expression: *Inpū* (August 2003)

Inpū (隠風, "Hidden Wind")

- Contributed under the byline Cork to the doujin manga anthology *Moe Maniax*, which featured *Azumanga Daioh* as its theme.
- August 16, 2003, on the second day of Comiket 64 (Circle Space East Bi 57a)
- 2 pages total, Circle Name: Honeywort Studio (Organizers: Masamune, Yoonsuk).
- End-of-volume comment: Arawi Keiichi "It's true that I'm fishing like this, but mentally, I don't feel like I'm relaxing at all. In fact, having a drink with this fish and passing out would be easier on my mind."



Moe Maniax Cover. The cover illustration was not done by Arawi but by Masamune, who organized the dōjinshi.

A Manga Where the Speech Bubble is the Protagonist

After establishing Himarayairuka, Arawi dedicated himself to original work, temporarily stepping away from creating fan art for *Azumanga Daioh*, which he had been obsessed with for a time.

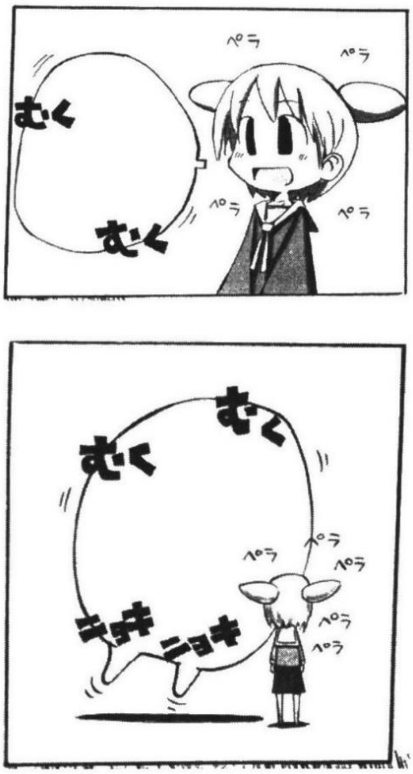
However, he hadn't completely severed ties with the fan community. He occasionally checked the websites of friends he had interacted with and communicated with them by posting on their message boards.

After about a year of this loose connection, one of his acquaintances (Masamune) invited him to contribute a guest manuscript. The friend was planning to publish a doujin manga anthology focused on *Azumanga Daioh* at Comiket 64 in the summer of 2003 and requested a submission.

Arawi accepted the request and contributed the two-page manga *Inpū* [1] to the doujin circle "Honeywort Studio." His friend proceeded as planned, distributing the anthology *Moe Maniax*, which included *Inpū* [2].

So, what kind of work was *Inpū*? Despite being a guest contribution, the manga exuded a unique presence that was on par with his original works.

The opening of Inpū features Chiyo Mihama, a main high school girl character from *Azumanga Daioh*. Chiyo appears to be talking to herself, and a large speech bubble is drawn on the left side of the panel, accompanied by the onomatopoeia "Perapera" (the sound effect for chattering).



From *Inpū*, page 1: Chiyo's inflating speech bubble materializes.

Crucially, no dialogue is written inside the speech bubble. Furthermore, the mimetic word "Mukumuku" (the sound effect for something swelling) is added next to the bubble. This suggests that in this scene, Chiyo is literally inflating the manga's speech bubble herself.

This depiction forces the reader to pay attention to the speech bubble—a convention in manga that is usually taken for granted. This experimental use of the medium's conventions was immediately present in the introduction [3].

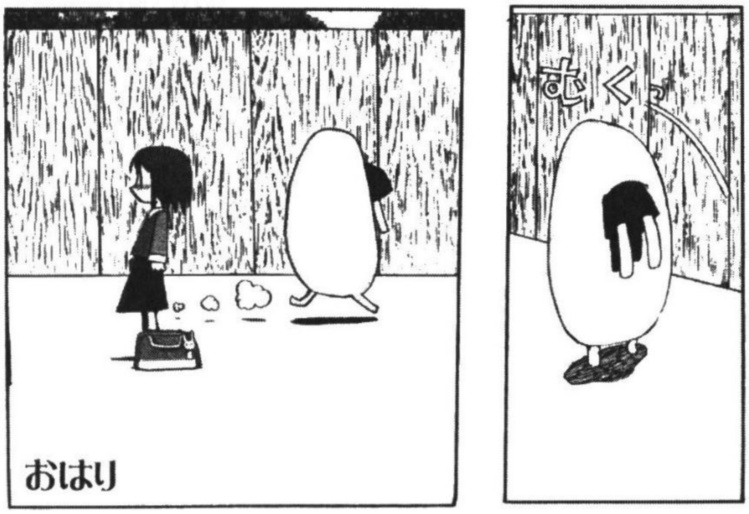
The presence of the materialized speech bubble intensifies in the next scene. The giant, swollen speech bubble takes on three-dimensional shading and sprouts two legs, transforming into a massive monster that stands before Chiyo. In the following panel, it commits the atrocity of eating Chiyo's upper body. The speech bubble monster was a threat that harmed the protagonist.

What stands out in Inpū is not Chiyo, the supposed main character, but the speech bubble itself. The absurdity of the bubble greatly exceeding its function as a symbol and materializing in the world of the story, combined with the humor of the monster bubble running rampant at the expense of the characters, creates *Inpū*'s distinctiveness.

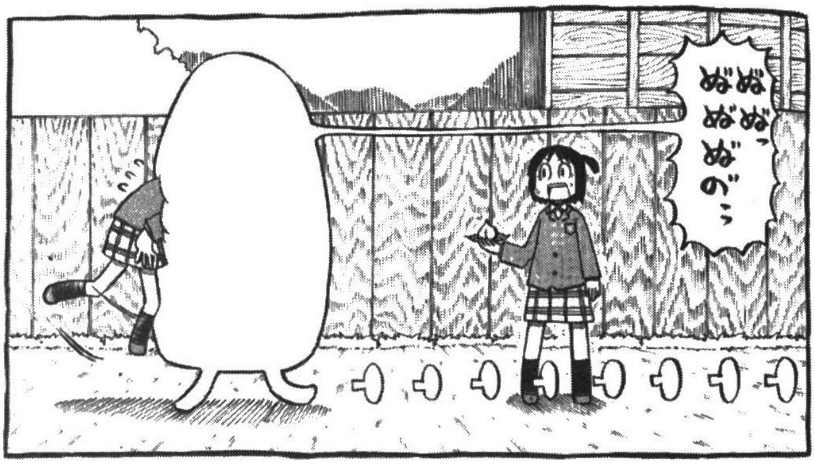
In parallel with the story of Chiyo being eaten by the bubble monster, a second character is active in *Inpū*. The romantic feelings of another main high school girl character from *Azumanga Daioh*, Osaka (Ayumu Kasuga), are depicted.

Naturally, a standard romance could not occur in the experimental world of Inpū. Osaka falls in love not with a human but with the speech bubble monster, a quirky twist in the plot.

Osaka is immobilized, blushing fiercely after falling for the monster bubble. Even after the bubble, still clutching Chiyo, moves away, Osaka remains rooted to the spot, her face flushed red. After eating Chiyo, the bubble monster also stole Osaka's heart. Through this depiction, the presence of the materialized speech bubble became even more intense.



From *Inpū*, page 2: The speech bubble monster runs off with Chiyo in its mouth, and Osaka, having instantly fallen in love with the monster, is blushing.



From Shōnen Gahōsha official dōjinshi *And Yet the Town Moves - Maruko Town Shopping District Summer 2010 Extra Issue*, page 31: In 2010, Arawi remade Inpū when he contributed the manga "Bokonon" based on Masakazu Ishiguro's manga *And Yet the Town Moves*.

Azumanga Daioh was a manga that focused on the casual school lives of high school girls. While it has episodes where the mysterious creature Chiyo-Father causes trouble, he only appears in the characters' dreams. A clear line was drawn between the absurd elements and the peaceful school life.

Arawi's interest at the time of writing Inpū, however, lay in avant-garde works typified by *Monthly Manga Garo* and Akasegawa's manga. It's easy to imagine that he wanted to introduce an element of experimentation, distinct from the original work, into his guest manuscript.

Furthermore, Arawi was also impressed by the OVA series *FLCL* during this period [4]. *FLCL* was an ambitious work that depicted the delicate psychology of adolescents while simultaneously using many playful techniques, such as abruptly changing the art style and incorporating meta-fictional elements.

Arawi integrated the absurdity learned from *Garo* and the joy of playing with expression learned from *FLCL*. The result was Inpū, a nonsense work that borrowed the characters from *Azumanga Daioh* but made the speech bubble its protagonist.

Inpū would later be described as a "controversial work." This was purely in reference to its wonderfully playful style that subverted and played with the conventions of manga expression [5].

---

[1]. The title of Arawi's manga in the doujin manga anthology that contained this work is given as *Inpū* (隠風, "Hidden Wind"). However, it was written as *Inpū* (陰風, "Shady Wind") in the introductions posted on Himarayairuka and in *Sasameyuki*. It is unknown which spelling Arawi intended as the official title, but this book adopts the spelling *Inpū* (隠風).

[2]. Arawi attended the Comiket venue and participated in a celebratory party hosted by the members who created the doujin manga anthology with him. He was able to reconnect with the friends he made through *Azumanga Daioh* after a long time. For Arawi's attendance at the meet-up, see the website, Sabō Sakakiya (run by the handle name Yoonsuk), "Summer Comiket Off-meeting Report 03, 8/16 Sat Summer Comiket!"

[3]. The phenomenon of a speech bubble materializing also occurred in *Hakoniwa*. When the sentient coffee tried to pour milk into itself, a hand grew out of a speech bubble to lift and pour the milk—an absurd depiction that might have inspired the speech bubble in *Inpū*.

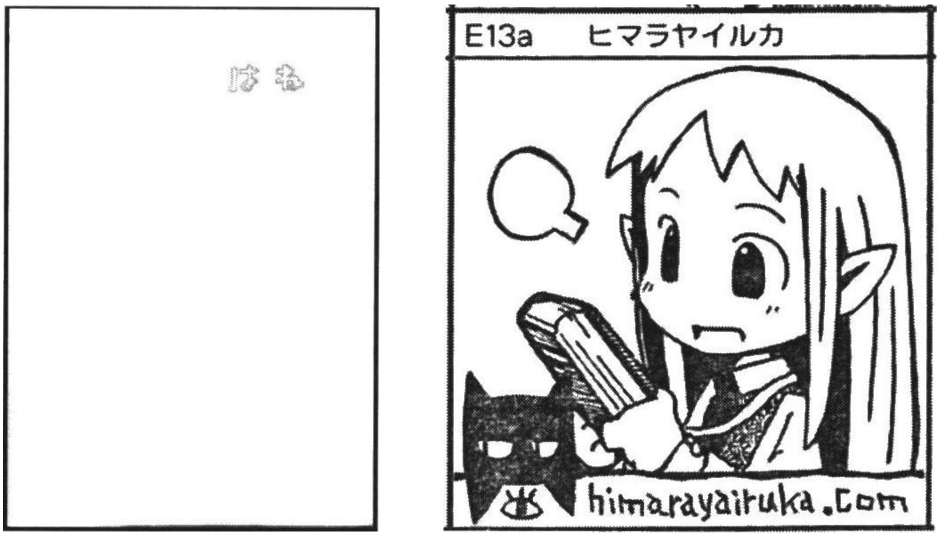
[4]. See the comment "June Himarayairuka" in *Sasameyuki*. *FLCL* was the original anime work produced by Gainax immediately following *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. As such, despite being an OVA series, it garnered high attention from anime fans, which likely led Arawi to watch it.

[5]. See the comment "August Himarayairuka" in *Sasameyuki*.

Mental World and the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" #2: *Hane* (August 2003)

Hane (はね, "Wings")

- August 31, 2003, at Comitia 65 (Circle Space E13a)
- Copybook (photocopied), B5 size, 22 pages total, Circle Name: Himarayairuka, Byline: Arawi Keiichi


はね
E13a
ヒマラヤイルカ
himarayairuka.com

Left: *Hane* Cover.

Right: Himarayairuka Circle Cut published in *Tia's Magazine 65*.

The Second "Self-Philosophical Manga"

Let's briefly summarize the works Arawi planned before participating in Comitia. Immediately after deciding on his first exhibit at Comitia 63 in early 2003, he intended to draw *Futsū-chan*, featuring Futsū-chan and Hakonome as protagonists. However, he ultimately published *Shiawase no Kakudo*, a story about angels working in the celestial realm.

For the next event, Comitia 64, the circle cut he submitted featured the characters Nantonaku and Hako-kun, whose settings he had been developing. He intended to publish a manga starring these two, tentatively titled *Nantonaku* [1].

However, *Nantonaku* also failed to materialize. Instead, he published *Hakoniwa*, a "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" that was the antithesis of a simple character manga. This process—starting with one idea, shattering it with a second opinion, and then attempting to reassemble the scattered fragments—was constantly repeated in his manga conceptualization:

> ***It's at the stage of putting out idea 1, crushing it with opinion 2, and then figuring out how to connect those scattered fragments.***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Manga's Drafts Story" (漫画のネームの話), March 4, 2003]

The exact same creative process can be found for Comitia 65. Arawi initially conceived of a character named Nekayaha-san and planned to publish the manga *Nekayaha-san* [2]. However, Nekayaha-san does not appear in the finished work. He broke down the initial idea and began creating a completely different manga.

The resulting work, *Hane*, became the second "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga," following *Hakoniwa*. Arawi recalls that this manga was a personal success and his first turning point as a manga artist [3].

> ***I believe I created a character called "Nekayaha-san" and intended to draw a manga from there. However, being able to publish Hane was truly significant. It was undeniably my first turning point since starting dōjinshi.*** [From an interview for this book]

Arawi sensed the potential of *Hane* immediately after finishing it, leading him to print 100 copies for the first time for his third Comitia appearance. Furthermore, when he exhibited the work, a line of buyers formed, and the copybooks sold out instantly.

> ***Drawing this manga was extremely fun.***
> ***I felt this sense of excitement while drawing. It's the first time I've felt this.***
> ***[...] Wow, manga is interesting.***
> ***I'm going to start printing now.***
> ***Hmm, how many copies should I print?***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Manuscript Finished" (脱稿), August 27, 2003]

> ***When I'm drawing manga, sometimes I get a feeling that "This is going to be a hit!" even before I've published it. That feeling was strongest when I drew Hane. It was a gamble, but I decided to print 100 copies of the copybook for the first time. My prediction was correct, and they sold out quickly. It was also the first time a queue of people formed in front of my circle space. I still wonder what that was all about.*** [From an interview for this book]

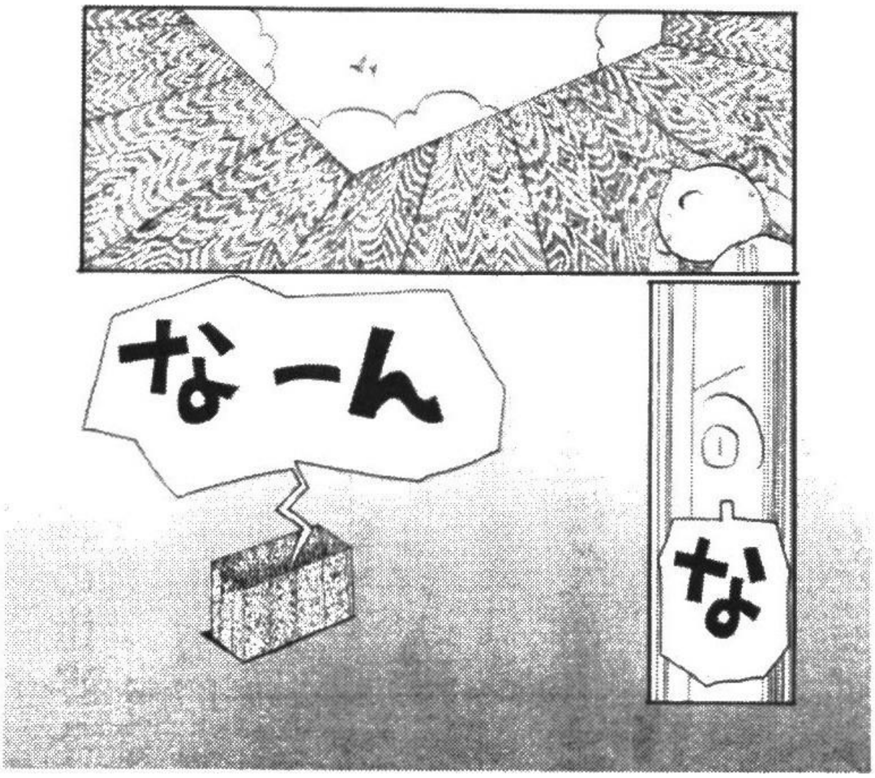
So, what kind of work was *Hane*? Its story is even more cryptic than the previous one, making it difficult to understand on a single read-through. However, the work is not nonsensical. With careful reading, its themes can be analyzed.

Let's start by reconfirming the genre of *Hane*: the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga." During this period, Arawi was motivated by a desire to "convey what I'm thinking through the filter called manga." This resulted in the completion of the previous work, Hakoniwa, which used sandplay therapy as its motif. The world of *Hakoniwa* was interpreted as a metaphor for the girl's mind, and by extension, an expression of the artist's own solipsistic thinking.

Hane also depicts a person's mental world. However, it attempts to portray the spiritual realm itself without an easily recognizable motif like sandplay therapy. This resulted in a worldview that is even more absurd and abstract than the previous work.

Despite its difficulty, a key to interpreting *Hane* is its symbolic connection to *Hakoniwa*. In the previous work, the girl's isolated miniature garden was revealed at the end to be only the size of a small shed. *Hane*, on the other hand, begins with the protagonist girl suddenly becoming immobile, surrounded by wooden boards that appeared out of nowhere.

The transition is: from *Hakoniwa*, where the girl's narrow space was shown at the end, to *Hane*, which begins with the girl being confined in a small area. By making the surrounding circumstances of the protagonist a continuation, Arawi subtly signaled to the reader that *Hane* was the essential sequel to the previous work.



From *Hane*, page 4.

From the World of Solipsism to the World of Alterity

Hane served as the effective sequel to *Hakoniwa*, making it the second "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga." However, it's crucial to note that Arawi explicitly stated that he "wanted to do the complete opposite thing, given how the last one went" when comparing the two works [4]. The motivation behind writing *Hane* was to negate and overcome the view of the world presented in the previous work.

> ***Speaking of solipsism, I realize now that my old manga Hane goes diametrically against it.***
> ***It's something like realism within fantasy, or whatever.***
> ***I read it again recently and it was actually quite funny lol***
> ***This is generally true, but it's fun to think about things like ontology however you like.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "The Wagtail's Clap and the Accidental Episode," September 24, 2006]

Hakoniwa was fundamentally based on solipsism; the world was conceived as containing only objects the girl wished into existence, based on the idea that "everything other than oneself is a fantasy created by oneself." While Arawi did not fully believe in solipsism, hence the intrusion of the Property Agent (the symbol of the Other), *Hakoniwa* was unquestionably founded on a solipsistic premise.

Hane, conversely, starts from the alterity concept: imagining the mental world within the mind of the Other. Consequently, it was constructed with a concept completely opposite to the previous work: depicting the mental image that an other-person holds of the girl.

> ***The content is maybe "how others see me." Most of it is metaphorical expression, so it might feel a bit puzzling, but I put a lot of effort into drawing it.***
> [From Himarayairuka, August 20, 2003]

For a solipsist who believes only their own consciousness is real, the existence of the person before them is like a phantom. Arawi deliberately chose to stand on the side of the Other—the one who feels like a phantom—and take the image that someone else holds of himself as the subject of his manga. Calling *Hane* "realism within fantasy" was precisely because he was depicting himself (= realism) within the mind of the Other (= fantasy).

Imagining how one is seen by standing in the world of the Other rather than the Self—this is the core theme Arawi sought to express in *Hane*. As he said, the work was constructed as the reverse of solipsism.

What prompted Arawi to draw the alterity-themed *Hane*? The inspiration likely came from Hitoshi Iwaaki's manga, *Parasyte*.

> ***We got excited talking about manga that make you cry.***
> ***When I brought up Parasyte, the air went, "Huh?"***
> ***Wait, doesn't everyone cry?***
> ***Incidentally, Slam Dunk got the most votes.***
> [From Himarayairuka, June 14, 2004]

Just before he started conceptualizing *Hane*, Arawi had been recommending *Parasyte* to people as a manga that makes one cry [5]. Intriguingly, this work contained a hidden motif related to alterity.

Parasyte begins with the high school student Shin'ichi Izumi having his right arm taken over by a highly intelligent parasitic creature, which he names Migi. Forced to live together, Shin'ichi is drawn into conflicts with other parasitic creatures that prey on humans.

Towards the climax of the story, there is a memorable scene where Shin'ichi and Migi communicate in a dream world they share while sleeping. Their special situation—two intelligent life forms coexisting in one body—allowed them to share the same dream and even converse.

In the dream, Shin'ichi creates images of his mother and friends who were victims of the parasites. Migi, upon seeing Shin'ichi 's images, comments, "None of these are what I saw with my own 'brain'...." When Shin'ichi tries to visualize Migi in turn, Migi's reaction remains muted. Migi resigns itself, saying, "The points where we can truly understand each other are almost just 'dots,' " leaving Shinichi feeling bewildered.

This scene expresses the differences in perception between two distinct species. Humans and parasites have vastly different sensory organs, properties, and brain structures. Thus, even when experiencing the same events, Shin'ichi's perceived information was received as bizarre by Migi.

Does this mean that the world looks the same to other humans? Migi argues otherwise, stating that even among "humans, who should have similarly structured brains," if they "could exchange souls, they would see and hear worlds beyond imagination."

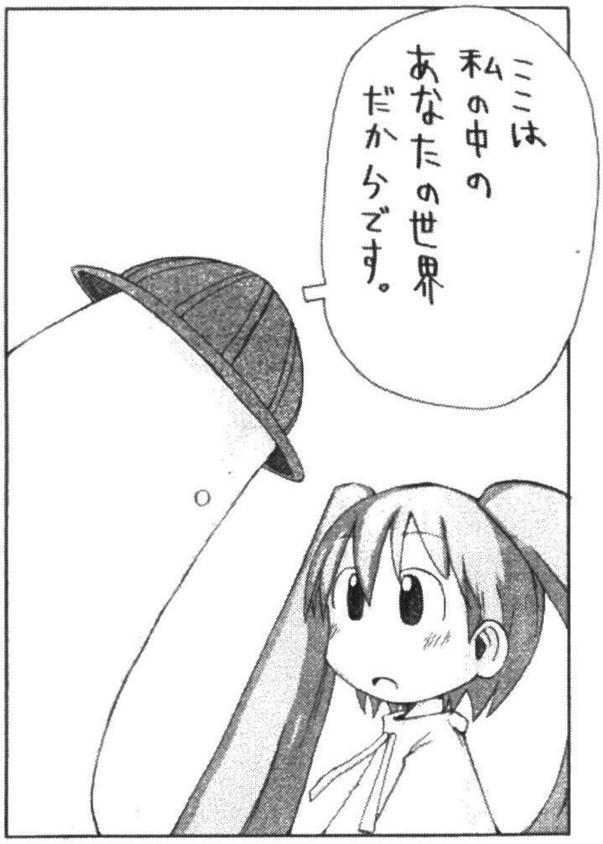
The world one perceives is vastly different from the world another perceives. Therefore, if one could exchange souls, one would experience an unimaginable world. Indeed, Shin'ichi and

Migi, who shared consciousness in a dream, glimpsed entirely different images of the world within each other. This was the concept of alterity presented in *Parasyte*.

The concept of Hane—the image of the girl within the mental world of the Other—was born from significant inspiration from *Parasyte*. Furthermore, by applying the alterity concept of *Parasyte*, the seemingly absurd themes of Hane can be understood.

For instance, the beginning of Hane depicts the girl, without any clear context, encountering her past self. She is then abruptly confined by a wooden board enclosure, and unexpectedly grows wings from her back—a rapid succession of events beyond immediate comprehension.

However, this disorder was intentional. Arawi learned from *Parasyte* that to express the mental world of the Other, one has no choice but to depict an "unimaginable world." In other words, to embody the world of an image conjured by the Other, Hane deliberately created a world that is difficult to understand.


ここは私の中のあなたの世界だからです。

From *Hane*, page 10: An other (a ghost-like entity) informs the girl that her true identity is merely an image conceived within the mental world of the Other.

The Essence of the Mental World is in Emotion

We have established that *Hane* was founded on the concept of alterity and depicted the consciousness of the Other as an "unimaginable," absurd world. Next, let's examine the characters and distinctive expressions in the work.

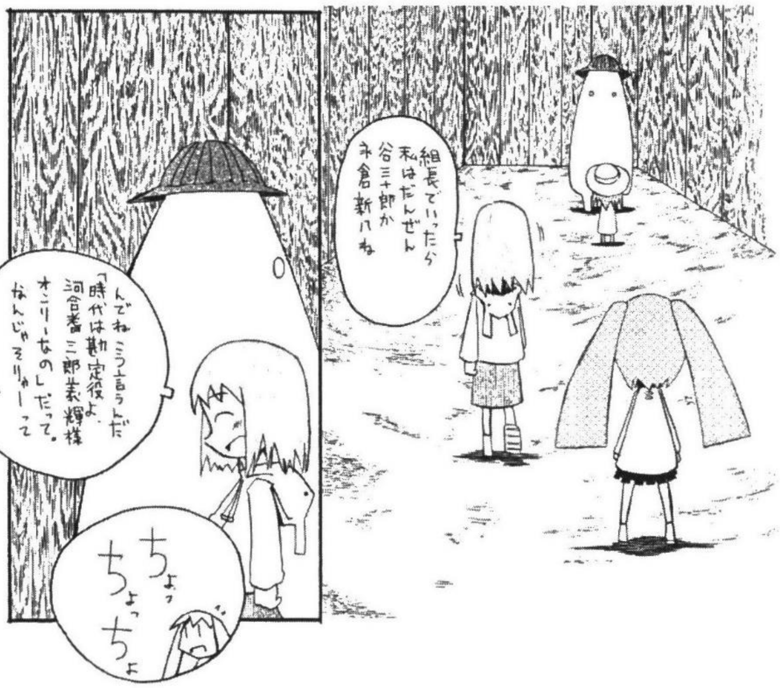
As we've noted several times, Arawi favored the combination of a girl and a mysterious mascot character during this period. The protagonists of *Hane* follow this pattern: a Girl and a Ghost (Obake), both unnamed.

However, their roles differ from those in previous works. Unlike the free-spirited Pino in *Shiawase no Kakudo* or the self-centered girl in *Hakoniwa*, the Girl in *Hane* does not assert herself. As an image conjured by the Other's mind, she is constantly bewildered by the absurd events around her and in no position to argue her own perspective.

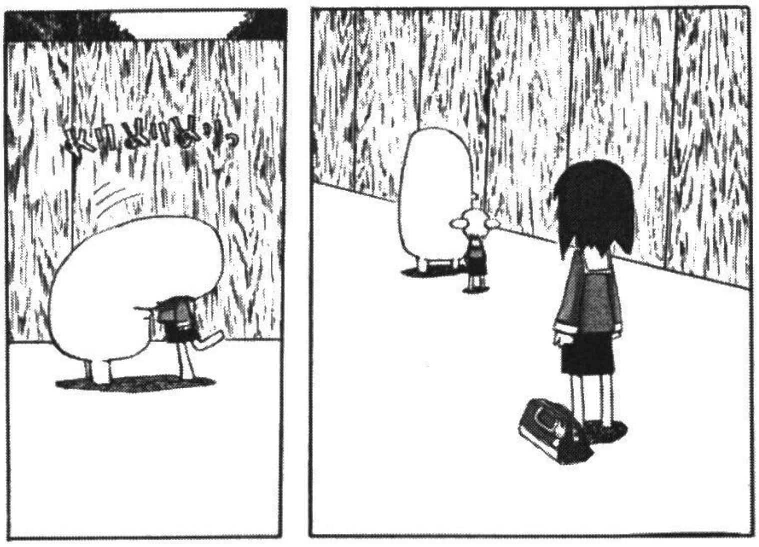
The Ghost, on the other hand, is the most talkative character, eloquently discussing the mysteries and secrets of this mental world. Although the Ghost's identity is never explicitly revealed, its dialogue strongly suggests it is the Other who is imagining the Girl's image.

This pairing of a silent Girl and a talkative Ghost (the Other) creates a situation where the Girl, though distressed, mostly listens to the Ghost's words. If the story of *Hane* were to be summarized, it would be about the Girl being tossed about by incomprehensible events while continuously hearing the words of the Ghost who conceived that absurd world.

The Ghost's design was inspired by the speech bubble monster from *Inpū*. Arawi drew *Inpū* in late July 2003 and began inking *Hane* just half a month later. It's plausible that he developed the Ghost—an oval, white body with two short legs—from the concept of the materialized speech bubble in his guest manuscript.


組長でいったら私はだんぜん谷三十郎か永倉新八ね
んでね こう言うんだ「時代は勘定役よ。河合耆三郎素輝様オンリーなの」だって。なんじゃそりゃーって
ハハハ
ちょっ ちょっちょ

From *Hane*, page 2: The woman with pigtails in the foreground is the Girl, the woman wearing the hoodie in the background is her friend Kiri-chan, and the mysterious creature in the back is the Ghost. The little girl in the straw hat facing the Ghost is a phantom of the Girl's childhood self.



From *Inpū*, page2: The speech bubble monster, Chiyo, and Osaka have evolved into the Ghost, the (Childhood) Girl, and the (Current) Girl and her friend in *Hane*.

Hane also inherited the experimental expression from *Inpū*'s speech bubble: the materialization of manga symbols within the story's world.

When a manga character is distressed or confused, they sometimes emit a few droplets of sweat from their head to clearly convey that emotion (a manpu or manga symbol). In *Hane*, the Girl is shown emitting these sweat droplets as a sign of her confusion (as referenced in the image two pages prior).

Conventionally, this sweat is merely a symbol of the character's emotion and disappears in the next panel as if nothing happened. In *Hane*, however, the symbolic sweat droplets materialize as a liquid in the story's world and are collected in a glass cup. *Hane* depicts the absurd development of a materialized manga symbol affecting the narrative.

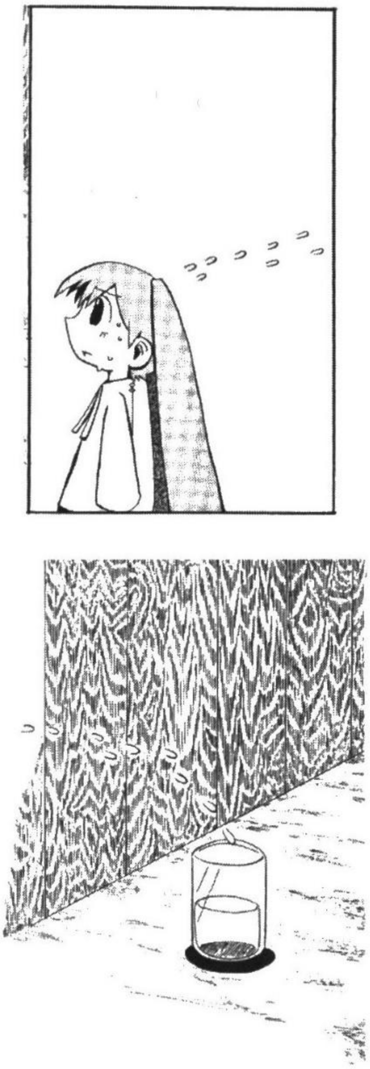
The materialization of the manga symbol in *Hane* carries a special meaning. Beyond being an experimental depiction, the materialized sweat in this "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" contained a symbolic message.

In his garrulous speech to the Girl, the Ghost argues that the essence of this mental world lies in emotion—specifically joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure. While people can suppress and disguise their feelings, they cannot undo the emotions themselves. Therefore, the Ghost asserts that while the real world is governed by physical laws, the mental world is set in motion by the emotions a person harbors.

It is clear that the Ghost's perspective is Arawi's own philosophy. If so, the meaning of the materialized sweat can be deciphered. In a mental world where everything is driven by emotion, it is natural for emotions to have a strong presence. Thus, the symbolic expression of confusion—the sweat droplets—was unnaturally exaggerated, materialized, and became even more conspicuous than the characters themselves.

> ***What is reality for a thought?***
> ***The reality for a thought***
> ***must be something different from the reality in our physical world.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "56-Year-Old Though" (56年の思想), June 7, 2008]

Arawi likely had the intuition that in the mental world of *Hane*, the Girl's agitated state could not be fully expressed without going beyond conventional expression. The materialization of the sweat symbol is far removed from the "reality of the physical world" that is normally assumed. Yet, for the "reality for a thought" (the mental world), it was a true-to-life expression, which is why he exaggerated the symbol of emotion.



From *Hane*, page 11: The manga symbol for sweat materializes and collects in a cup.

How the Death of a Loved One Appears to Others

Hane features a third character besides the Girl and the Ghost: Kiri-chan, the Girl's friend. Focusing only on the Girl, the story appears to be merely about getting caught up in absurd events. Interestingly, however, shifting the focus to Kiri-chan reveals a specific theme within the bizarre narrative. Let's analyze Kiri-chan's story from this changed perspective.

In the opening scene, Kiri-chan is chatting and walking with the Girl. The next moment, however, Kiri-chan vanishes like smoke. The Girl is bewildered by her friend's sudden disappearance but is too preoccupied with the absurd events piling up around her to worry for long.

Kiri-chan reappears towards the end of the story. The Girl, having been shocked by the Ghost's revelation that this world is one conceived by an Other, is relieved by her friend's return.

However, Kiri-chan leaves again in an unexpected way. She suddenly gains a halo around her head and flies high into the sky, saying, "See you later." The Girl tries to grab her leg to stop her, but her body is already out of reach.

The meaning of the climax of *Hane* is clear: Kiri-chan had already died in the real world, and the Girl was experiencing her loss. The Ghost (the Other), who is imagining the world of this work, was well aware of Kiri-chan's death. That is why the Ghost created the image of Kiri-chan, with a halo, ascending to heaven.

According to Arawi's philosophy, the mental world is driven by emotion. It is therefore natural that a work set in the mental world depicts the loss of a friend, as the emotion felt when losing a close family member or friend must be the strongest kind.

The Girl, left alone, monologues at the end of the story: "My friend died in my world, as seen from someone else's world. That was a very lonely thing." She then sweats profusely, an expression of the shock from the sudden separation from Kiri-chan.

This sweat, which should have been merely a manga symbol, materialized within the story's world, as we have seen. This expression gave the Girl's emotion a sense of urgency in a way that was "different from the reality in our physical world." The work showed that the feelings of grief and loneliness for a close friend were so intense they became visibly palpable.

From where did the triangular relationship between the Ghost, the Girl, and Kiri-chan draw its inspiration? It was likely conceived from Natsume Sōseki's novel, *Kokoro*. Arawi began reading novels classified as pure literature around the time he started writing *Hakoniwa*, and he was deeply impressed by *Kokoro*, reflecting its elements in his work.

Kokoro meticulously depicts the sin and remorse committed by an egoistic man, and Sōseki himself said, "Those who study the human mind should read this novel [7]." For Arawi, who was exploring the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga," *Kokoro* must have been an invaluable reference.

> ***Before starting work, I reread Natsume Sōseki's Kokoro after a long time.***
> ***Damn it. Even after all this time, I'm still feeling a rush.***
> ***But... but my friend, love is a vice, do you understand?***
> [From kumomadori blog, "Sōseki" (漱石), December 1, 2007]

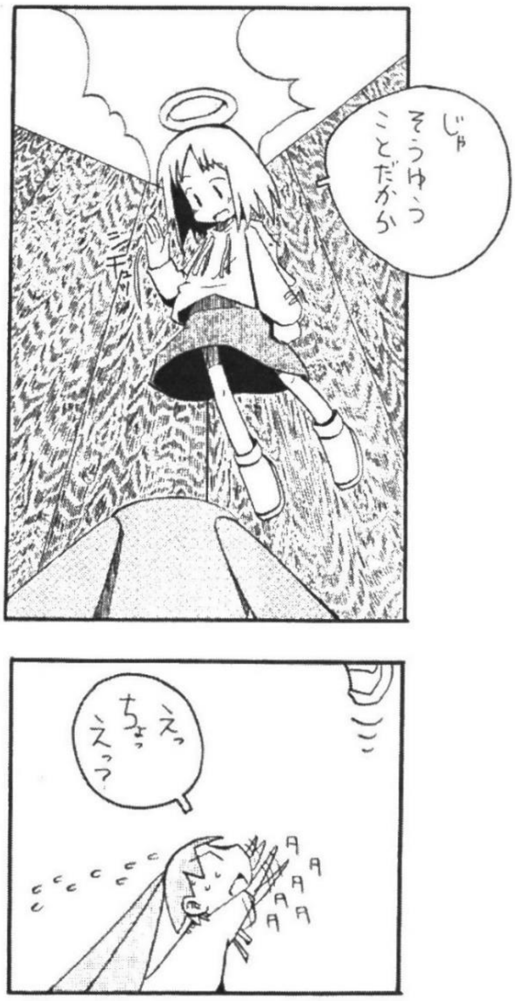
The narrative of *Kokoro* is divided into two major parts, the latter being the testament of the intellectual known as Sensei (Teacher) who lived in the Meiji era. In the testament, Sensei confesses his past: his rivalry over a woman led his friend, K, to commit suicide. Sensei's quote, "love is a vice, do you understand?" [8], cited above, originates from this experience.

In writing the testament, Sensei was conscious of the young man who admired him reading it, and so he penned the secret surrounding K's death. This means Sensei was writing while imagining the image of himself and his friend's death as it would be reflected in the mind of the Other (the young man).

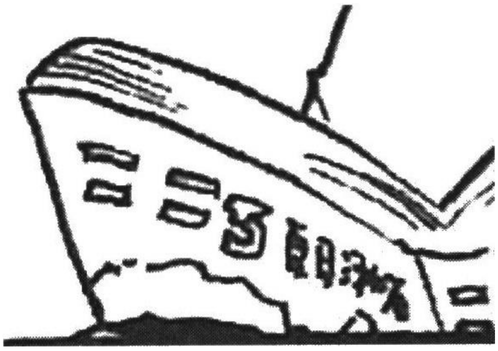
In that sense, *Kokoro* is very similar to Hane, which depicts the image of the Girl and her friend's death reflected in the mental world of the Other. While the Girl in *Hane* did not indirectly cause her friend's death like Sensei, it's clear that a correspondence can be drawn between the characters of the two works.

The Girl and Sensei, Kiri-chan and K, and the Other who imagines the mental world (Ghost) and the young man reading the testament—all can be compared. Just as the Girl in Hane felt loneliness after losing her friend, Sensei, too, said he wanted "to put up with my lonely self now" [9], based on his past of having indirectly caused his friend's death.

Furthermore, in *Hane*, the names of the Girl and the Ghost are never revealed, while only the deceased friend, Kiri-chan, is named. This is reminiscent of *Kokoro*, where the names of the young man and Sensei are not given, but only the deceased friend is referred to by the proper name K. Kiri-chan's initial is also, whether intentionally or not, "K."


じゃ
そうゆう
ことだから
えっ
ちょっ
えっ？

From *Hane*, page 13: Kiri-chan says goodbye to the Girl and flies away.



From *Nichijou* Volume 3, page 139: Arawi drew the Shinchō Bunko edition of *Kokoro* within the work.

It Felt Like Little "Wings" Had Sprouted

In the mental world of *Hane*, the Girl was profoundly emotionally affected by witnessing the death of her friend, Kiri-chan. The grief and loneliness of permanent separation were so intense that the symbol of emotion materialized in the story.

Following this experience, the Girl begins a personal introspection about the fact that her true identity is merely an image created within the mental world of the Other. Let's examine this final scene, which is both the most difficult and the most crucial part of *Hane*'s narrative.

Upon realizing her true nature, the Girl concludes that she is not her "real self." This image of herself, created by the Other, was constructed by observing and hearing the real girl's "small gestures, appearance, and uttered words." She thus understands that the self "reflected in others" is something separate from the genuinely existing self.

The realization that she is not her real self leads to a further discovery: the urgent emotion she felt when losing her friend was also not truly genuine. She certainly felt a strong emotion, enough to materialize the sweat symbol, but it was merely a part of the image conceived by an Other, not the real her.

Her emotions, she concludes, can never be genuinely shared with anyone. Even the intense feelings surrounding a person's death are no exception. If this is true, then no one knows the real her, and she can never truly understand anyone else. The Girl, intuiting that "No one knows the real me and life will just end," is heartbroken with loneliness, thinking, "If that is all of a person, how sad it must be."

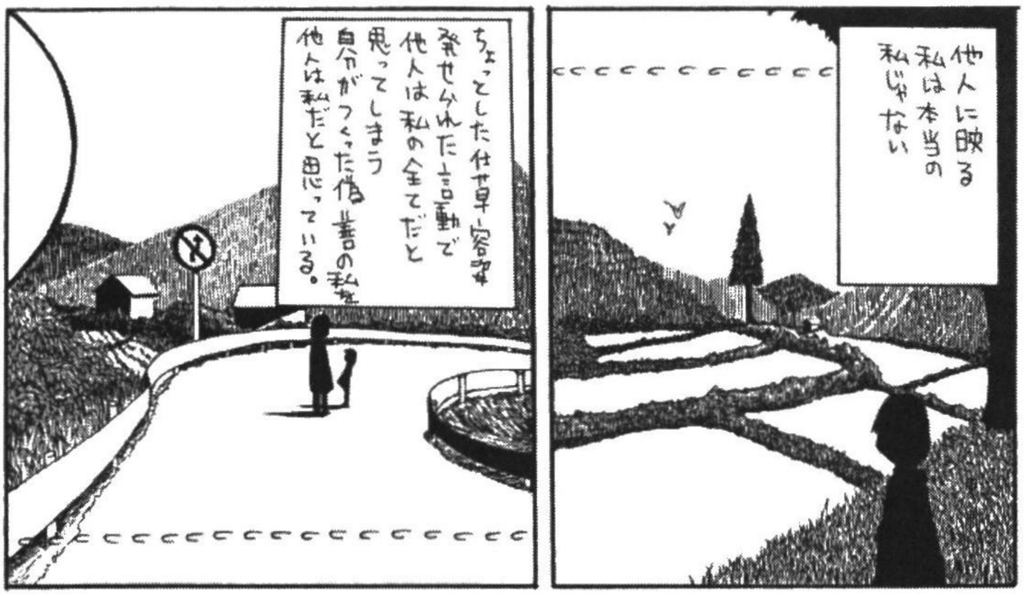
Thus, through the creation of Hane, Arawi once again confronts isolation. Reaching a state of loneliness, where one is understood by no one after delving into the human psyche through manga, is a shared conclusion with the previous work, *Hakoniwa*.

However, *Hane* arrives at a contrasting resolution to *Hakoniwa*, where the girl did not attempt communication with the Other. In the final scene, the Girl muses, "That's why I thought: Your voice—I will accept that voice," opening her heart and choosing to believe the Other, even after realizing that her true self is unknowable. She takes a crucial step forward in her thinking.

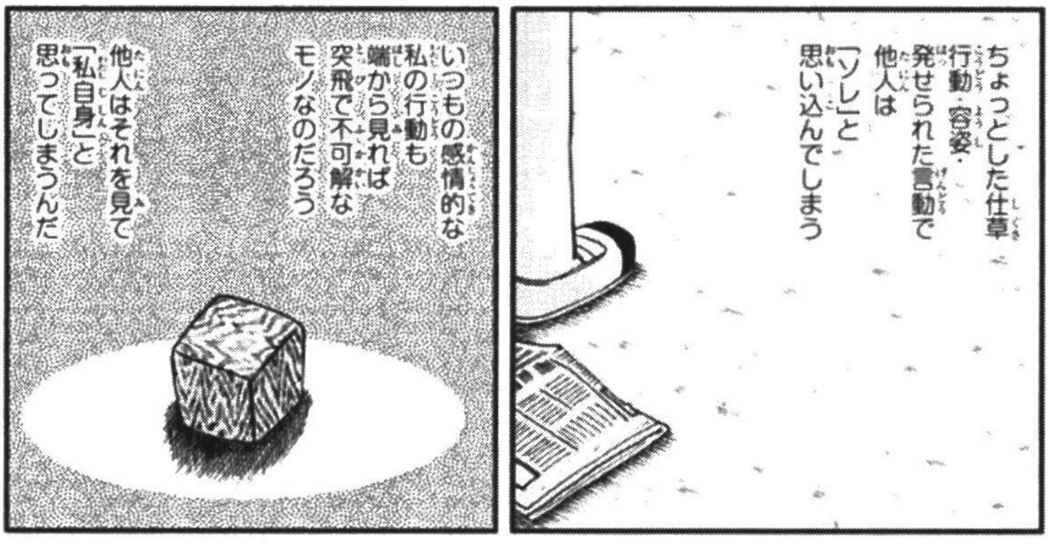
The Girl was already aware that her identity was just an image created by the Other, similar but not identical to reality. However, the clues to her real self could only be found within that image created by the Other. Therefore, she developed the thought that if she felt lonely because her real self was not understood, she should all the more avoid shunning others.

The phrase "I will accept that voice" leads to the conclusion that she can escape loneliness by listening to the echoes of her own existence within the other person.

Hane concludes with the Girl, having found her answer, shaking hands with the Ghost. This scene unequivocally symbolizes the attempt at mutual communication with the Other.


他人に映る私は本当の私じゃない
ちょっとした仕草・容姿
発せられた言動で
他人は私の全てだと
思ってしまう
自分がつくった偽善の私を
他人は私だと思っている。

From *Hane*, page 14: The sweat symbol, which represents the girl's agitation, materializes within the world of the story and is shown flying around the world—an absurd depiction.


ちょっとした仕草・行動・容姿・発せられた言動で
他人は「ソレ」と思い込んでしまう
いつもの感情的な私の行動も
端から見れば突飛で不可解なモノなのだろう
他人はそれを見て「私自身」と思ってしまうんだ

From *Nichijou* Volume 8, page 13: The girl's monologue from *Hane* was self-homaged in Chapter 126.

Following the publication of *Hane*, Arawi spoke metaphorically about his relationship with others using the word "wings." He acknowledged the disconnect between the self and the other, where people can never truly understand each other. But he fantasized that if his own assertion sprouted wings, his feelings might reach the distant Other.

> ***I used to think that the space between being understood by others and asserting oneself required quite a sublime mileage, but just assuming that it's not actually the case makes it feel like little wings have sprouted.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "Escabator" (エスカベーター), November 29, 2007]

The motif of wings carries the hope that emotions might be communicated with the Other, who should normally be impossible to understand. Given this, the conclusion of *Hane*—affirming the existence of the Other and seeking the self through them—is embodied in the work's title.

The Girl in Hane is also seen with wings sprouting from her shoulder, flying into the sky and looking down at the wooden board enclosure that had trapped her.

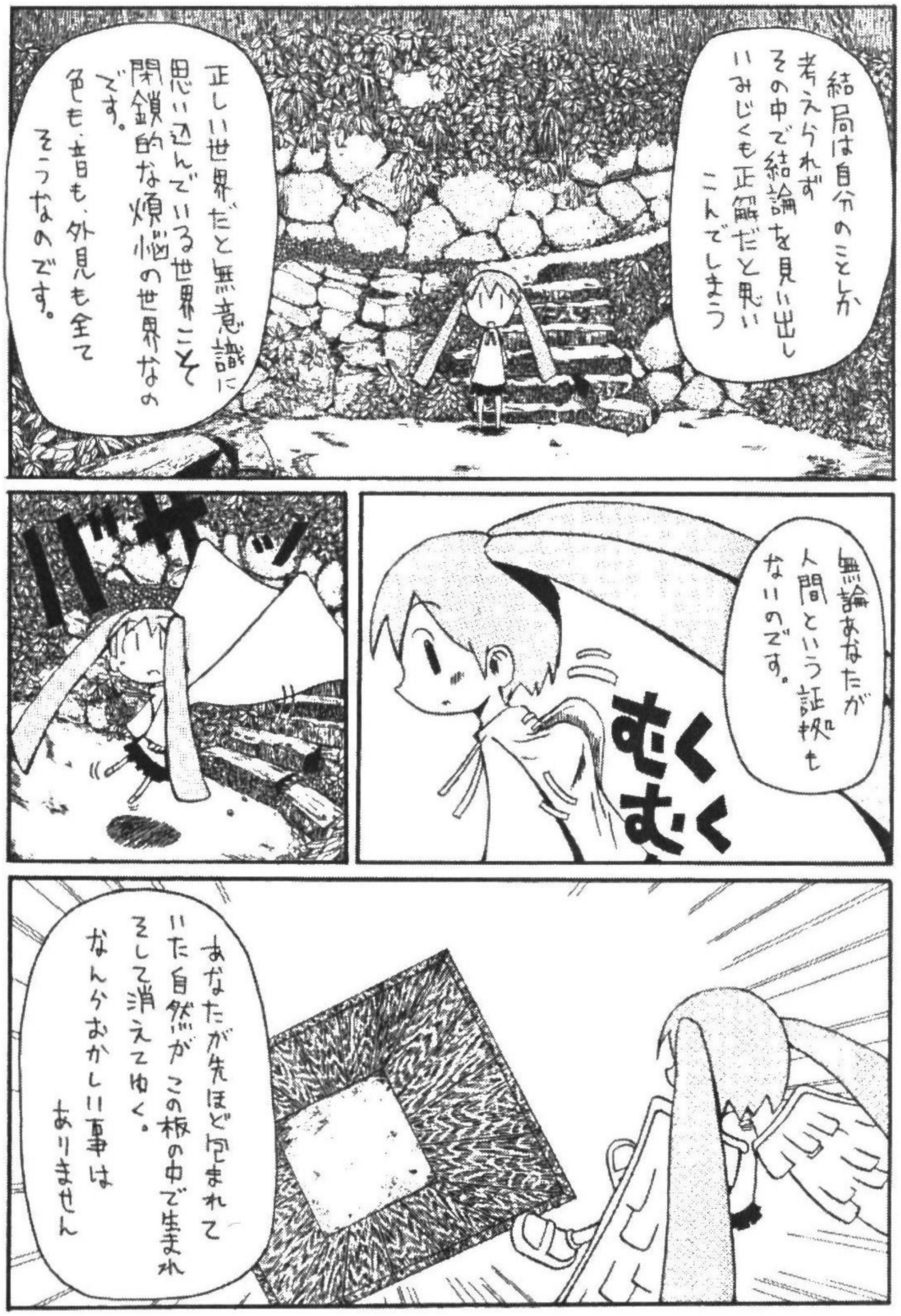
Referring to Arawi's statement, this flight is understood to symbolize the desire to escape her own mental world. The wings contain the wish to fly away from the isolated world of self-consciousness and into the world observed by the Other.

Ultimately, the Girl in *Hane* loses her wings and falls. However, the experience of having flown once and looked down at the mental world imagined by the Other from a high place is what allowed her to reach the conclusion of believing the Other and listening to their voice.

The next work, *Machi*, as will be detailed later, differs from the previous two works, which focused on the mental world of the protagonist, by featuring a diverse cast of unique characters—in other words, many Others.

Machi was created because Arawi himself adopted the attitude of accepting the existence of others, even without fully understanding them, a conclusion reached in *Hane*. Just as Hane was drawn in response to the conclusion of Hakoniwa, the conclusion of Hane profoundly influenced the next work.

In that sense, the wings that fell in *Hane* did not break completely; they flapped onward into the next work, finally reaching the hearts of others.


結局は自分のことしか考えられずその中で結論を見い出しいみじくも正解だと思いこんでしまう
正しい世界だと無意識に思い込んでいる世界こそ閉鎖的な煩悩の世界なのです。色も、音も、外見も全てそうなのです。
無論あなたが人間という証拠もないのです。
むくむく
バサッ
あなたが先ほど包まれていた自然がこの板の中で生まれそして消えてゆく。なんかおかしい事はありません

From *Hane*, page 7: Wings sprout from the Girl's shoulder, and the floating girl looks down on the mental world that had previously confined her.

The Prototypes for *Hane* and *Machi*

Hane was the second "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga," following *Hakoniwa*, and was set in the mental world. However, unlike the previous work, which was rooted in solipsism, *Hane* incorporated the concept of alterity, leading to a complex structure where the Other conceived the Girl's image.

The narrative of *Hane* centers on the Girl witnessing the ascension of her deceased friend. Due to the setting in the Other's mental world, the story becomes intricate. The Girl (or her image) experiences intense emotion over her friend's loss but, upon realizing her true nature, comprehends the truth that no one can truly know the real self.

Crucially, the Girl ultimately resolves to continue communicating with others, even if true mutual understanding is impossible. She realizes that exploring her own existence is only possible by accepting the voices of others and investigating the images they project. This was Arawi's own declaration of intent to listen to the voices of others.

Finally, in this chapter, we must point out the connection between *Hane* and the study work *Gona B*. About a year before writing *Hane*, Arawi conceived of *Gona B* as his first story manga. The planned work was a journey of a human and a four-legged brain wandering the world, envisioned as a "surreal and warm" story. Unfortunately, *Gona B* was never completed, and the manuscript is now lost.

However, a section of the dialogue from the final part of *Gona B* was preserved on Himarayairuka. Referring to this dialogue, we can deduce the story's ending: the dying brain bids farewell to the human it traveled with and ascends with sprouted wings, mirroring the conclusion of *Hane*.

Let's read through the dialogue from Gona B and interpret its story, tracing its connection to *Hane*.

> ***I wonder how much time has passed since then.***
> ***Everything feels like yesterday.***
> ***It's time to say goodbye now.***
> ***You taught me so many emotions.***
>
> ***How to laugh.***
> ***How to cry.***
> ***The courage to move forward...***

> ***There were times I found you annoying, not knowing anything.***
> ***Even then, you cared for me more than necessary.***
> ***Without you, I wouldn't be who I am, and the tree of my heart wouldn't have grown.***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Excerpt from Gona B," December 11, 2003]

One of the protagonists, the Brain, reflects on its friendship with the human it journeyed with and murmurs that their time together is short. The Brain is aware of its impending death, hence the line, "It's time to say goodbye now."

The interesting point is the monologue continuing with the discovery that the Brain was "taught so many emotions" by the human. We can imagine that the Brain was initially an introverted existence, not knowing how to laugh or cry, and lacking the courage to move forward. However, by spending time with the human, it opened its heart to the other, and emotions began to flow naturally.

In *Hane*, it was also stated that the mental world "is set in motion by emotion." The theme of emotion was already established in *Gona B*.

> ***The wings on my back are starting to grow.***
> ***I have to go now.***
> ***Tears are welling up.***
> ***Why?***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Excerpt from Gona B," December 11, 2003]

The Brain tries to steel its resolve, saying, "I have to go now," and bids farewell. Yet, as it examines the angel's wings sprouting on its back, it suddenly sheds tears. The Brain doesn't understand why it's crying, but one thing is certain: the Brain has gained a splendid heart.

> ***My wings are starting to move now.***
> ***A world I will never return to.***
> ***A person I will never meet again.***
>
> ***I don't want to leave.***
> ***Is it because I love you?***
> ***Ah,***
> ***I think I understand now.***
> ***This is love, isn't it?***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Excerpt from Gona B," December 11, 2003]

The dying Brain realizes it can never return to this world or see the human again. But the sadness and loneliness eventually transform into a different emotion: the most special feeling for the beloved human. It realizes that love has blossomed in its heart. The sentiment expressed as "I think I understand now. This is love, isn't it?" is strangely peaceful.

> ***Thank you.***
> ***I'm glad I came to this world.***
> ***The distance between us is growing.***
> ***Now,***
> ***With the greatest gratitude to this world.***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Excerpt from Gona B," December 11, 2003]

The Brain soars high into the sky, truly separated from the human now. Nevertheless, the Brain, having felt love, does not show panic. Instead, the words that escape its mouth are an expression of gratitude: "Thank you. I'm glad I came to this world."

While feeling reluctant to part with the human, the Brain is deeply satisfied and dies, sincerely loving everything in this world. There could be no better way to end one's life. "Now, with the greatest gratitude to this world," the Brain leaving this world has no regrets. The Brain was happy.

However, the scene where the dying Brain feels a great sense of love at the moment of parting with its loved one seems to surpass the theme of Hane. While the Girl in *Hane* resolved to attempt communication with the Other at the end of the story, she had not reached the state of being able to say, "With the greatest gratitude to this world."

Yet, the Brain's feeling of love in *Gona B* is not irrelevant to the manga Arawi would publish next. This is because *Machi*, the work Arawi published at Comitia after *Hane*, has benevolence as its central theme.

The Brain's actions foreshadowed that the attitude of the Girl in *Hane*—who chose to acknowledge the existence of the Other and attempt communication—would, if taken to its extreme, lead to a philanthropic spirit that affirms all others. In that sense, *Gona B* can be seen as the prototype for the works progressing from *Hane* to *Machi*.

---

[1]. See Himarayairuka, "Humming and Birdwatching" (ハミングとバードウォッチング), March 24, 2003. *"The one on the left is probably the circle cut for Comitia that I'll be*

exhibiting at this time. Their names are Nantonaku and Hako-kun (lol). After not seeing them for a while, wow, the ribbon is gone. I'd like to draw a manga about these girls, and several months have passed since I started thinking about it. I'm thinking of exhibiting it at some convention this year, or maybe not."

[2]. See Himarayairuka, June 16, 2003.

[3]. Arawi changed his long-time handle name, Cork, to his current name, Arawi Keiichi, around this period. This move could also be considered an extension of his "first turning point."

[4]. See Himarayairuka, June 9–11, 2003. *"The announcement for Comiket is out, and while some people are getting excited about working hard for Comiket, and others aren't, I'm quietly working on the name (draft) for the Comitia manga on the side. Given how the last one went, I want to do the complete opposite thing. Something like that."*

[5]. His affection for *Parasyte* remains strong, and he reacted when the anime *Parasyte: The Maxim* was announced. See the tweet from July 30, 2014. *"I'm shocked by the art for Sei no Kakuritsu. I thought 'Sei' was the main character's name, but his name is Shin'ichi. I'm surprised by various things. I wonder what will happen with Uda-san and the others."*

[6]. Hitoshi Iwaaki, *Parasyte*, Volume 10, pages 161–162.

[7]. Shinchō Bunko Edition of *Kokoro* (Sōseki Natsume), "Commentary," page 363.

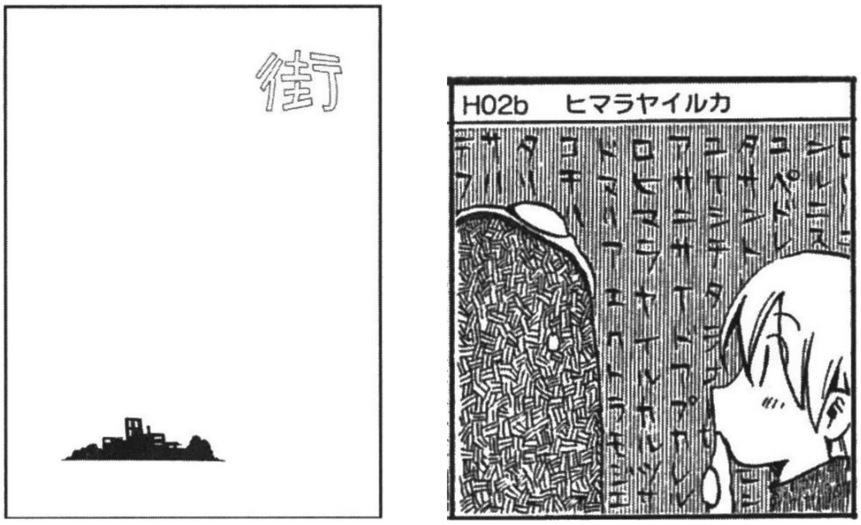
[8]. Shinchō Bunko Edition of *Kokoro*, "Part 1: Sensei and I," page 41.

[9]. Shinchō Bunko Edition of *Kokoro*, "Part 2: Sensei and I," page 47. The passage *"We who were born in the modern age, filled with freedom, independence, and the self, must all experience this loneliness as a sacrifice"* is also seen.

A World Full of Love: *Machi* (November 2003)

Machi (街, "Town")

- November 16, 2003, at Comitia 66 (Circle Space H02b)
- Copybook (photocopied), B5 size, 22 pages total, Circle Name: Himarayairuka, Byline: Arawi Keiichi
- Also distributed with hand-made cloth badges: "Tobazu Tori" (飛ばず鳥, "Bird That Doesn’t Fly") and "Bobilo & Kuroneko" (ボビロ&黒ネコ, "Bobilo & Black Cat") [1]



Left: *Machi* Cover.

Right: Himarayairuka Circle Cut published in *Tia’s Magazine 66*.

The Utopia of His Youth

After publishing *Hane*, Arawi spent the next two months expanding his creative activities outside of manga. Specifically, he conceived the short animated project *Anonymous* in September and released the original song "Tobazu Tori" using the music production software ACID Pro in October. Feeling a sense of accomplishment from the completion of Hane, he likely needed a recharge period before tackling his next work.

He began working on manga again in late October in preparation for Comitia 66. Arawi decided on a major shift in style from the previous two works, settling on the genre of "leisurely gag manga" for his next project. He was determined to publish a work that was easy to read, the complete opposite of the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga."

This fourth manga was titled *Machi*.

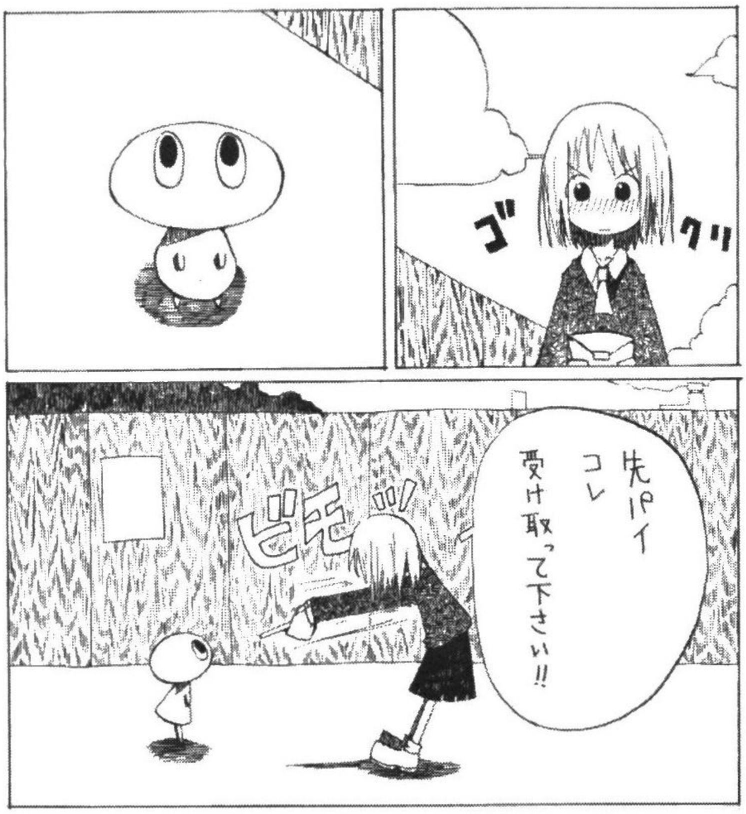
> ***This time's Comitia manga is probably, probably, a leisurely gag.***
> ***High school girls, hikikomori, robots, and angels are planned to appear.***
> [From Himarayairuka, October 23, 2003]

While his previous works, the *Final Fantasy XI* manga and *Shiawase no Kakudo*, could be classified as gag manga, Arawi had never referred to his own work as such before. *Machi* was the first work where he consciously incorporated comedic elements.

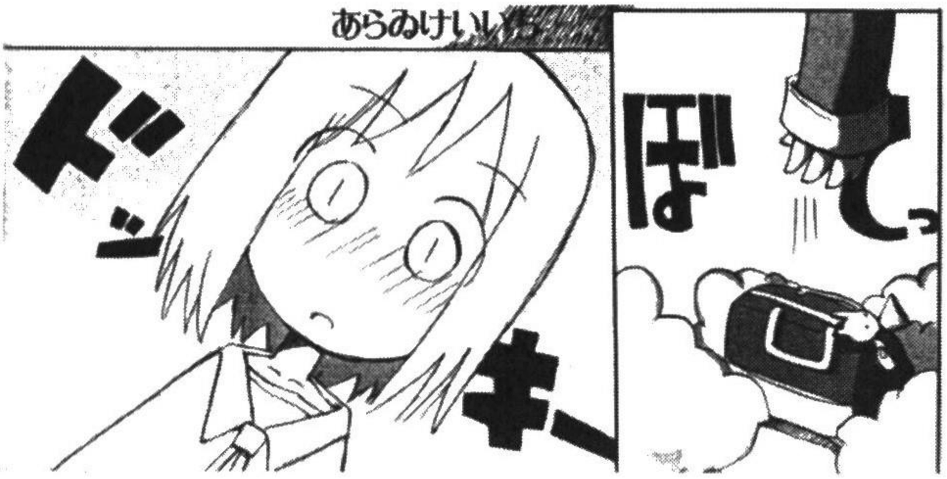
After defining the style of *Machi*, Arawi conceived the characters: a robot named Senpai (Upperclassman) who was only two heads tall, and a (nameless) Girl. While the combination of a mascot-like character and a girl was consistent with previous works, there was one clear difference: the Girl harbored romantic feelings for Senpai.

The scenario of a girl confessing her love to a robot may seem bizarre. However, the girl's fresh innocence is endearing, and the awkward exchanges with the object of her affection are comical. By combining unique character settings with elements of a romantic comedy, *Machi* successfully established itself as a "leisurely gag."

In addition to the Girl and the Robot, Machi also features three other characters: a young girl claiming to be a god, a young man, and a Grim Reaper. Thus, *Machi* unfolded a story featuring multiple, highly individualistic people.


ゴクリ
先パイ
コレ
受け取って下さい!!
ビモ゛!

From *Machi*, page 1: The girl attempts to hand a love letter to the robot, Senpai.


あらゐけいいち
ぼてっ
ドッキーン

From *Inpū*, page 1: The scene where Osaka instantly falls in love with the speech bubble monster. The girl in *Machi* who falls in love with a mysterious being was inspired by Osaka/Ayumu Kasuga.

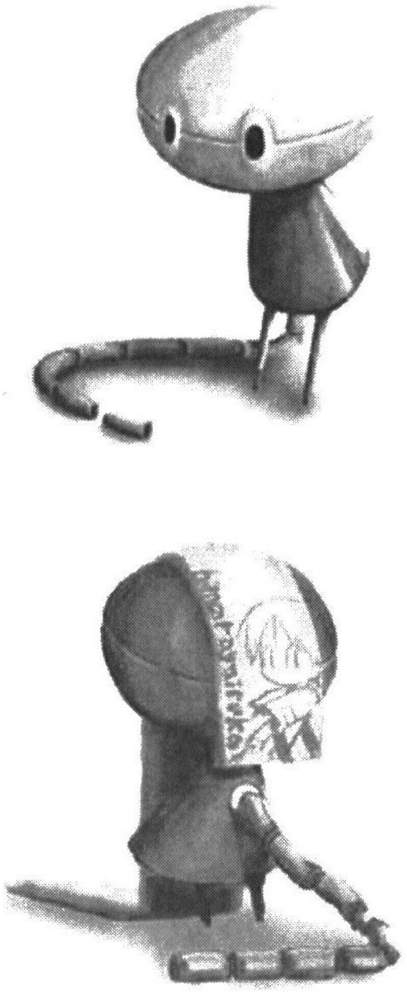


Illustration published on Himarayairuka around November 2003: Unlike *Machi*, Senpai is depicted with the steel texture typical of a robot.

When conceiving the characters for *Machi*, Arawi had one work in mind as a model for the gag manga: Masami Yūki's *Kyūkyoku Chōjin R* (究極超人あ〜る, "Ultimate Chojin R").

Kyūkyoku Chōjin R begins with the transfer of the male android high school student, R. Tanaka Ichirō, to a private high school. Furthermore, the school is secretly haunted by the ikiryō (生霊, "living ghost"), Sayoko Amano. Yet, these two are merely members of the Photography Club. In fact, the human upperclassmen, who are the source of most trouble, are more conspicuous than either of them.

The manga is filled with unusual beings—a robot, a ghost, and eccentric humans—all of whom are simply accepted and live freely.

This style directly influenced *Machi*. The robots and gods in Machi are depicted as slightly air-headed and approachable. In turn, the human characters are unfazed by their mysterious counterparts, with one even falling in love with a robot. Everyone in *Machi* lives together in harmony.

Arawi called the world of *Kyūkyoku Chōjin R*, where unique beings live happily, a Utopia. He therefore sought to create a similar world of his own. The "leisurely gag" he aimed for in *Machi* was also the realization of an ideal world.

Arawi's encounter with *Kyūkyoku Chōjin R* dates back to the late 1980s. He recalled in an interview that meeting the work in elementary school was the reason he began to "immerse myself completely in manga itself."

> ***If I hadn't read R in elementary school, I don't think I would have immersed myself completely in manga itself. I also don't think I would have tried to draw manga. [...]***
> ***A world where unbelievable people are accepted. A world where a ghost can come back to life. A daily life where a robot is accepted. To my surprise, the Utopia I held onto back then is still alive within me and serves as the source of my creation.***
> ***The fact that the shock I received back then continues to this day is because some percentage of me is made up of Yūki's manga.***
> [From *Tetsuwan Birdy Evolution* Volume 7 Limited Edition Bonus, "Masami Yūki 30+1"]

The worldview—where unconventional characters stir up the story and robots are normalized into daily life—was fostered in this work and later inherited by his commercial series, *Nichijou*.

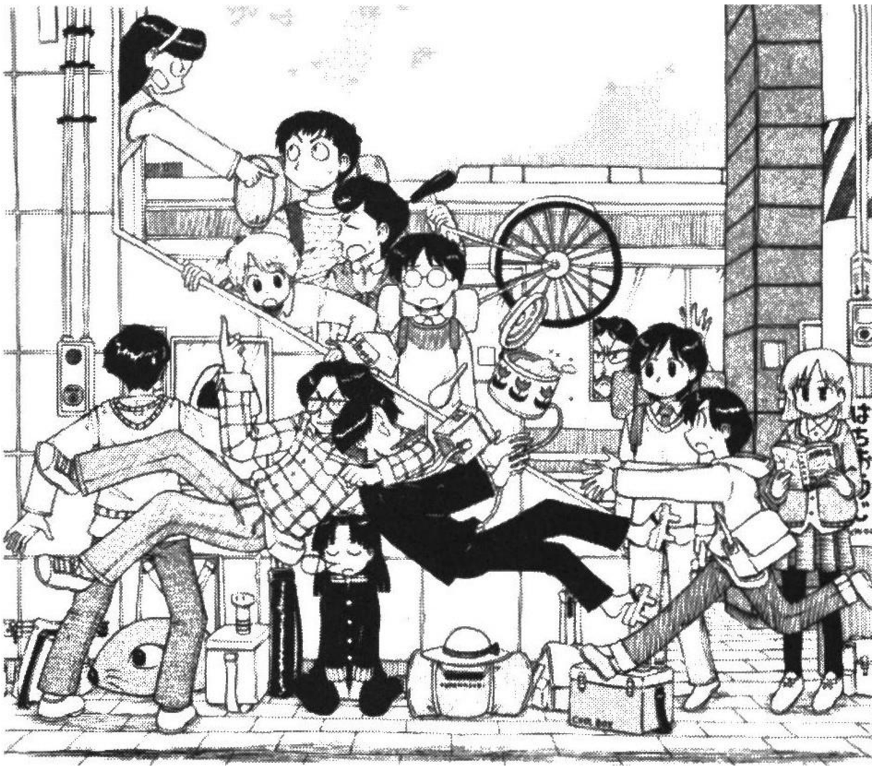
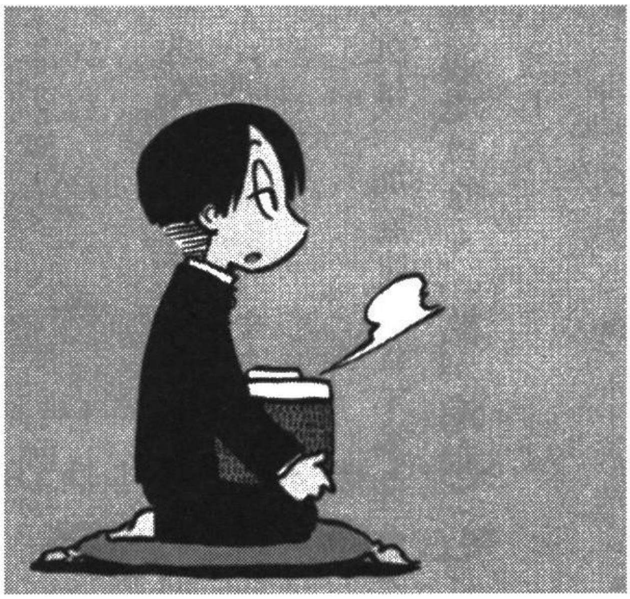


Illustration contributed to *Tetsuwan Birdy Evolution* Volume 7 Limited Edition: Depicts many of the characters who appear in *Kyūkyoku Chōjin R*.



Twitter post "R" on November 11, 2012: An illustration of R. Tanaka Ichirō.

Blending Leisurely and Absurd Gag Styles

The story of *Machi* features a girl in love with the robot Senpai, as well as a self-proclaimed god (a young girl), a Grim Reaper, and a human youth. Having previously set his works in the Celestial Realm *(Shiawase no Kakudo)*, and the spiritual realm *(Hakoniwa, Hane)*, Arawi now depicted a Utopia where all beings live together in harmony.

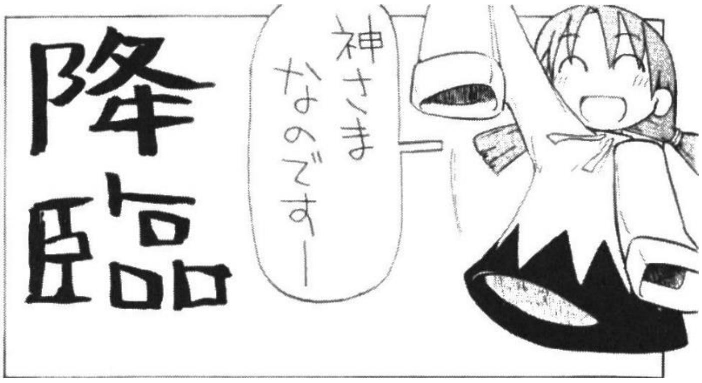
The main plot of *Machi* centered on a romantic comedy, a result of Arawi's decision to create a "leisurely gag manga." Indeed, the opening scene, where the girl attempts to hand a love letter to Senpai, sets a cheerful and gentle tone.

The story continues in this mellow, feel-good manner. No matter how preposterous the events become, the characters simply accept the situation and maintain calm interactions.

From the reader's perspective, however, the circumstances surrounding the girl quickly accelerate into the absurd. The gap between what is normal for the characters and what is normal for the reader generates a unique comedic experience, as the disconnect in perception grows with every turn of the page.

Let's look closer at the experiences of the Girl in *Machi*. The girl in love wants to convey her feelings to Senpai but can't muster the courage. She writes a love letter, but when she presents it, Senpai doesn't accept it and simply freezes in place.

Believing Senpai has rejected her, the girl is crestfallen and on the verge of tears. The next moment, a young girl floating in the air appears before her. This is, astonishingly, God. Responding to the girl's wish, "God, please let me go out with Senpai," the actual deity descends to Earth.



From *Machi*, page 4: The God in this work appears as a young girl in clothes with oversized sleeves.

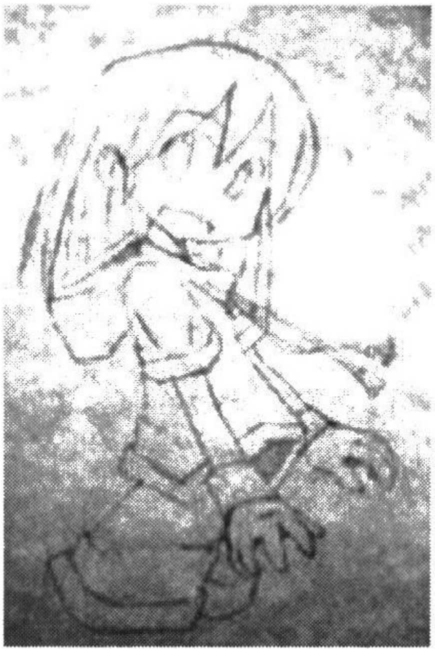


Illustration "jion" published on Himarayairuka, January 3, 2003: The design of this floating girl without legs was utilized for the God in *Machi* and was later remade as an illustration bonus for the purchase of *CITY* Volume 9.

God's arrival is utterly sudden. Yet, the Girl accepts it without question and asks for help to deepen her relationship with Senpai. God cheerfully accepts, saying, "That is a very simple thing to do-nanodesu!" God then gathers energy in their hands and fires an energy blast at Senpai. The blast causes a massive explosion that blows up the entire surrounding area, sending Senpai flying through the air. Apparently, to grant the wish, God had to detonate and then recreate the entire world to produce a new reality where the Girl and Senpai could be intimate.

In the recreated world, the Girl, who has inexplicably changed into pajamas, finds Senpai sleeping right next to her. Again, this is an incredibly bizarre situation, but she remains unfazed. Instead, she blushes and panics about the fact that she is now alone with Senpai.

After realizing her wish was granted, the Girl murmurs, "Thank you very much." However, God has already departed. Recreating the world was simply an everyday affair for them.

Thus, the Girl accepts an event that seems completely outlandish to the reader, simply receiving the divine fortune. And God performed this world-shattering feat as if it were a matter of course. *Machi* can be said to have two distinct faces: it can be read as a nothing-happens "leisurely gag" or an incomprehensible absurd gag, depending on the perspective.

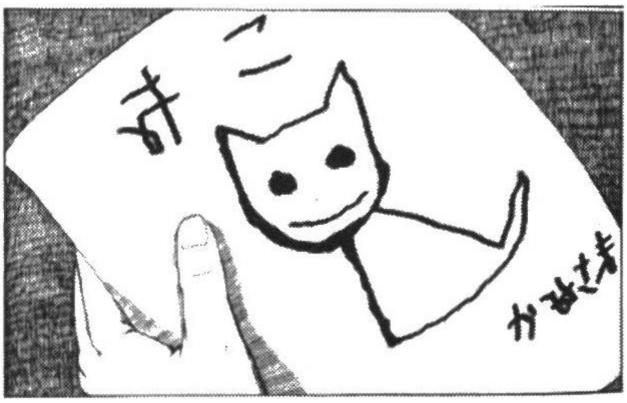
Arawi was well aware of this unique characteristic of his work. Because of this, he began to refer to the genre of *Machi* not as a gag but as "Himarayairuka." He was confident that he had arrived at a unique style that could only be expressed by naming it after his own circle.

The structural element of depicting events that are normal from the characters' point of view but absurd from the reader's perspective continued into his later work, *Nichijou.*

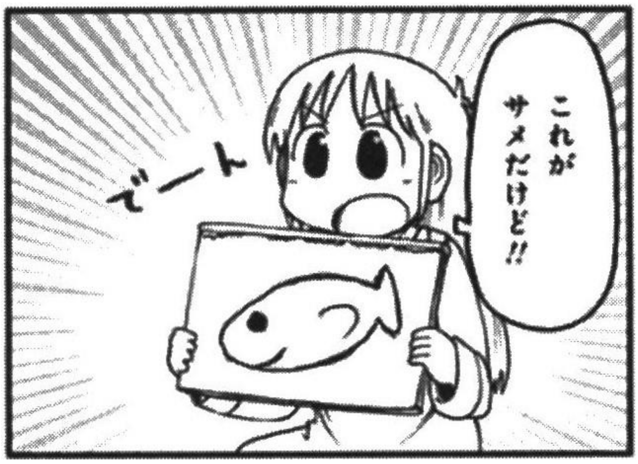
> ***About the manga I'm drawing now,***
> ***it hasn't quite reached the "mellow gag manga" I mentioned earlier.***
> ***It's not really a genre like gag or fantasy,***
> ***hmm, let's see,***
> ***it's become "Himarayairuka."***
> ***It's not so much that I enjoyed drawing it; I enjoyed it too much this time.***
> [From Himarayairuka, November 5, 2003]

Other elements from *Machi* were carried forward into *Nichijou.* For example, the design of God is one such element. Though God possesses superhuman power, they have the appearance of a young girl wearing a robe-like garment with oversized sleeves, and they speak in a polite tone using the phrase "...nanodesu."

These characteristics were incorporated into the character setting for Hakase, one of the main characters in *Nichijou.* Hakase is a young child with a genius inventor's brain, who wears an oversized lab coat and speaks in a polite tone. While the precursor to Hakase was the Professor Girl from *Helvetica Standard*, the elements of *Machi*'s God were also clearly adopted.



From *Machi*, page 14: An illustration drawn by God. A shared characteristic between the God in *Machi* and Hakase is their primitive drawing style.

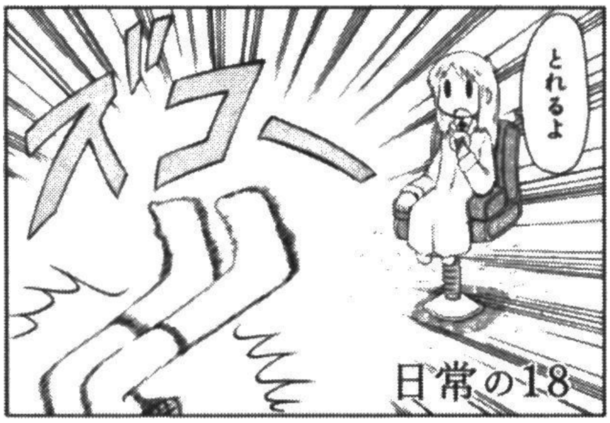


From *Nichijou* Volume 9, page 6: An illustration drawn by Hakase.

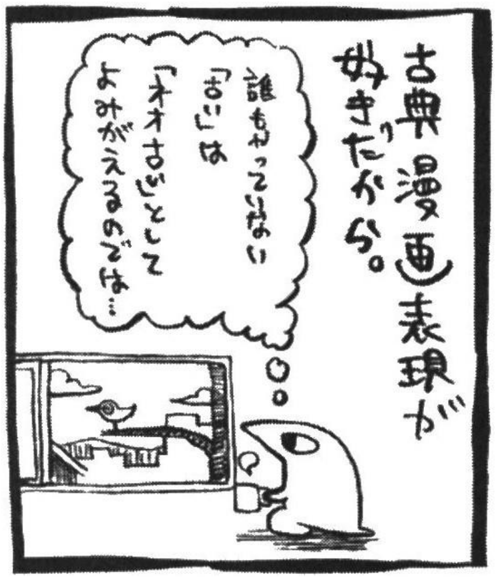
Furthermore, the classic manga technique of showing surprise by falling backward with one's legs thrust into the air (a zukkoke hyōgen) was adopted in *Nichijou* via *Machi*. The origin of the "staggering gag" that Arawi often features his characters performing can be traced back to Senpai in *Machi*.

> ***When I read it now, it feels new, you know! I think the falling gag would be absolutely hilarious if done today. Falling with your legs flipped up—that alone is funny, so why doesn't anyone do it? I drew it with a feeling of, "Alright, let's do it!"***
> [From *Studio Voice*, "Keiichi Arawi: Off-the-Charts, Otherworldly Creativity!," January 2008 issue]

Machi was the seminal work that awakened the element of gag comedy lying dormant within Arawi.


とれるよ
ズコー
日常の18

From *Nichijou* Volume 1, page 171: In Episode 18, Nano Shinonome is made to perform a variety of "staggering gags."


古典漫画表現が好きだから。
誰もやっていない「古い」は「オオ古い」としてよみがえるのでは…

From Helvetica Standard note, "Q&A #5," June 23, 2021: Arawi stated that the reason for using the "staggering gag" frequently is, as mentioned above, his "love for classical manga expressions." The text in the bubble: "Perhaps an 'old' that nobody has ever touched will be resurrected as 'Neo-Old'......"

May Love Be Shared with All People

While this work is considered the genesis of Arawi's gag manga, it is by no means lacking in substance. Just like his previous works, a current of the creator's philosophy flows beneath the surface of the narrative.

The theme that *Machi* sought to express was philanthropy (benevolence), as discussed in the section on Hane. The subtitle attached to the work is "philanthropy is wonderful," making it clear that philanthropy was the most critical subject for Arawi at this time.

> ***I drew this with philanthropy as the theme, in my own way. I'd be happy if you could feel the warmth in what remains after stripping everything else away.***
> [From the afterword of *Machi*]

This theme might sound like a leap if only considering the story of *Machi* in isolation. However, when viewed in connection with his earlier works, the philanthropic idea that permeates *Machi* can be naturally interpreted.

The previous work, *Hane*, started from the concept of alterity and depicted the image of the Girl as conceived in the mind of the Other. It concluded that while mutual understanding with the Other is impossible, one must still acknowledge the Other's existence and accept their voice.

Pushing this philosophy to its limit naturally leads to the spirit of philanthropy, which is nothing less than the attitude of affirming all Others without distinction.

Having sought to believe in the existence of the Other and re-examine his own image through their eyes in *Hane*, Arawi likely wanted to create a story that engaged with the Other to the furthest extent possible. Thus, while shaping *Machi* as a gag manga, he incorporated elements of the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" to express his idea of philanthropy.

So, where is the theme of philanthropy expressed in *Machi*? It is found in the Girl's romantic feelings and the actions of God.

Normally, a narrative centered on romance would be incompatible with philanthropy. A person in love tends to see only their beloved and themselves. This is evident in the novel *Kokoro*, referenced in the Hane section. Sensei, the protagonist, suffered a lifelong guilt for driving his friend K, his romantic rival, to suicide. Sensei's heart, which mused, "Love is a vice," was consumed by the egoism most distant from the spirit of philanthropy.

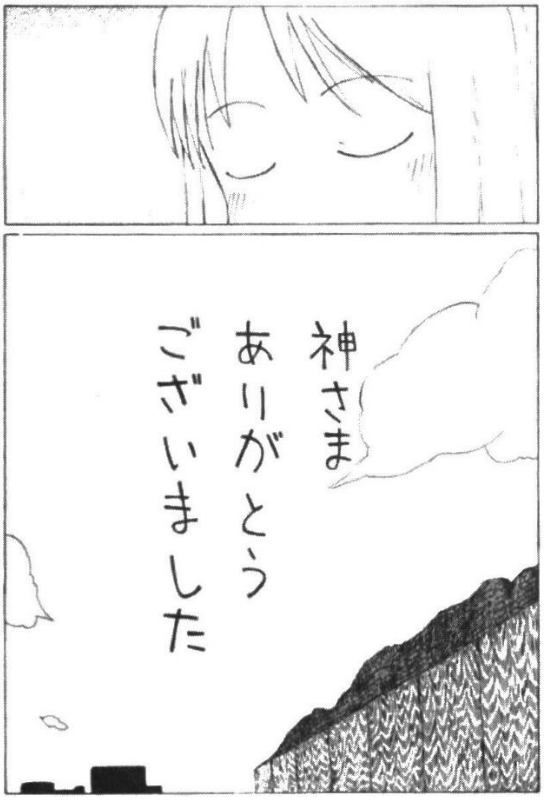
In *Machi*, the Girl is distressed over her unexpressed love for Senpai, but God's intervention grants her wish to be alone with him. The Girl, whose wish was granted, offers her gratitude from the bottom of her heart, saying, "Thank you very much, God."

This can be interpreted as philanthropy removing the self-centered romantic feelings that bound the Girl. God's willingness to help anyone freely not only granted her wish but also liberated her from the egoism of romantic love.

Thanks to her encounter with God, the Girl becomes profoundly grateful for everything around her. Since the story concludes here, we can only imagine what happens next.

It's likely, however, that the kindness she received was then paid forward to Senpai, to others, and to the world.

The Girl, made happy by God's benevolent act, in turn begins to share that love with her surroundings.


神さま
ありがとう
ございました

From *Machi*, page 15.

The idea is that when you receive unreciprocated love from an Other, the feeling of gratitude makes you want to share that kindness with someone else. By utilizing the human instinct to be kind when treated kindly, people can escape self-centered thinking and arrive at the spirit of philanthropy. The philanthropy embodied by the Girl in *Machi* was a step beyond the affirmation of the Other achieved in *Hane*.

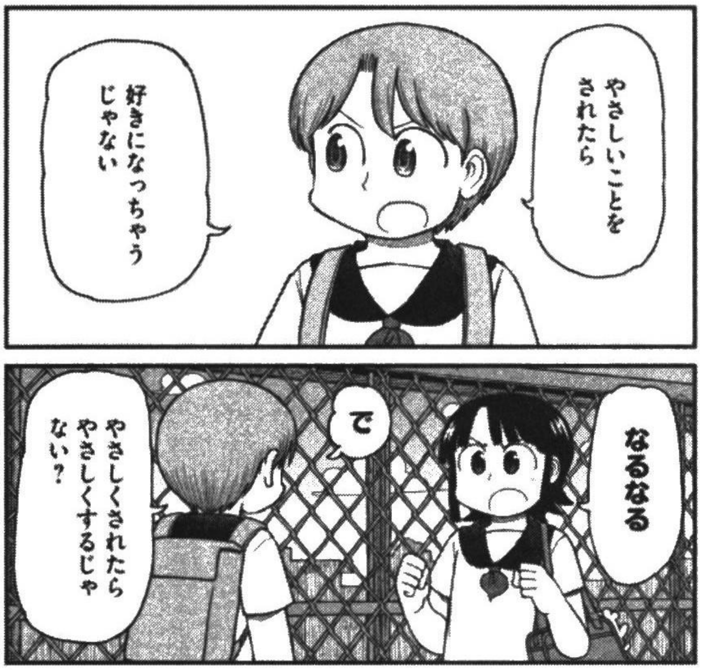
Crucially, the Girl does not abandon her personal feelings upon awakening to philanthropy. Arawi's philanthropic spirit aimed for an affirmation of all love: affirming her own feelings for Senpai, and affirming the feelings of others.

To understand Arawi's philanthropic spirit during this period, the song "Eien Naru Mono" (The Eternal) by Kazuyoshi Nakamura is insightful. The lyrics of this song, which pray for the happiness of all people and wish for love to reach everyone, were quoted on Himarayairuka.

> ***May love be shared with all people.***
> ***May this innocent feeling be eternal.***
> [From Himarayairuka, February 15, 2003] [2]

What is important is that "The Eternal" suggests that one's individual philanthropic spirit is not enough. The song evolves into a prayer that everyone should hold even a small feeling of benevolence.

Love must not only be given to all people, but all people must possess the feeling of philanthropy. This thought aligns with the conclusion reached in Machi. Arawi desperately hoped that many Others, not just himself, would embrace the spirit of benevolence.


やさしいことをされたら
好きになっちゃうじゃない
なるなる
で
やさしくされたらやさしくするじゃない？

From page 125 of *CITY* Volume 5: In Episode 64 of *CITY*, published fifteen years after *Machi*, two middle school girls, Matsuri and Eri, excitedly discuss an idea. Their idea is that when a person is treated kindly, they in turn try to be kind to someone else, and if kindness is fully realized, war will disappear from the world. Their conversation shows that Arawi has consistently contemplated the philosophy of philanthropy—affirming both the self and the other—both then and now.

Love and a Name are Granted to the Youth

The plot of *Machi* can be summarized as follows: it begins with the Girl's unrequited crush on Senpai, continues with the abrupt, bizarre introduction of God, and culminates in the theme of philanthropy. However, this summary is incomplete, as the story branches off midway to follow the narrative of a single Youth.

The Youth first appears right after God descends before the Girl. The Youth interrupts the conversation, yelling, "Who the hell are you!!" at the suddenly materializing deity.

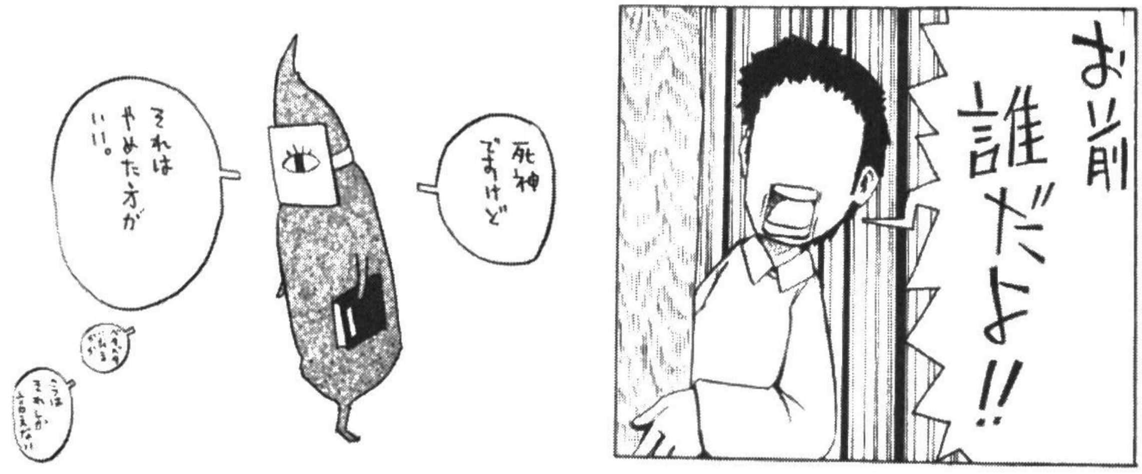
Indeed, God's appearance was abrupt, and the Youth's line voices the reader's own confusion, especially in contrast to the Girl who immediately adapted and never questioned the presence. However, at this point, the Youth himself is an individual of unknown identity who appeared just as abruptly. This makes his exclamation of "Who the hell are you!!" comically ironic, eliciting the thought: "Who the hell are you too?!"

Machi then splits the narrative between the Girl and God, who ignore the Youth and continue their conversation, and the Youth, who ponders what to wish for from God. Having already covered the Girl, let's focus on the Youth.

Upon seeing God, the Youth is driven by curiosity, wanting to witness "a superior ability that ordinary people couldn't accomplish." He decides to wish for God to make cola come out of a water faucet [3].

However, unlike the Girl's wish for romance, the Youth's wish doesn't reach God. The Youth is admonished to reconsider by the Grim Reaper who had also descended to Earth with God. The Youth is slightly intimidated by the sudden arrival of the Grim Reaper but quickly adapts. Here again, a situation that is outlandish to the reader is immediately accepted by the characters.

The Grim Reaper, despite the name, does not take lives. The reason for stopping the Youth's wish was a simple piece of motherly advice: cola would make the sink sticky when he washed his hands.


お前誰だよ!!
死神ですけど
それはやめた方がいい。
ここはそれしか言えない

Left: From *Machi*, page 6: The design of the Grim Reaper, wearing a one-eyed mask, suggests a similarity to the one-eyed box that appeared in *Hakoniwa*.
Right: From *Machi*, page 3: The Youth was secretly observing the interaction between the Girl, Senpai, and God from a hiding place.

The Youth then throws a strange question at the helpful Grim Reaper: "Then who am I!?" In fact, the Youth's name was not being withheld from the reader; he had no name from the start.

This creates a subtle twist: the Grim Reaper is depicted as a somewhat approachable figure, while the nameless Youth is the truly mysterious one. What appears to be a clear division between the Grim Reaper's unreality and the Youth's reality is reversed, with the Youth being the enigma. This kind of reversal is only possible in a work like *Machi*, which balances the "leisurely gag" with the absurd gag.

The Grim Reaper pauses for a moment, then suggests, "How about Hamayū?" The Youth loves the name Hamayū (ハマユウ, "Spider Lily"), exclaiming, "That's so wonderful!" The episode between the Youth, now Hamayū, and the Grim Reaper concludes once the Youth obtains his name.

Let's delve into this scene where the Youth is given a name. A person's name is typically only spoken by others. Conversely, if there are no others around, a name is unnecessary. This implies that the nameless Youth had never interacted with anyone before this moment.

Recalling Arawi's initial concept for *Machi*, he mentioned planning to include "high school girls, a hikikomori ("shut-in"), a robot, and an angel." The Youth in *Machi* was likely conceived based on the "hikikomori." Though not physically isolated in his home, the Youth was symbolized as avoiding interaction with others by being nameless—he lacked a designation used by others, representing his isolated state.

Arawi published a short poem titled "Tenjō Mukyū" (Eternal and Boundless) shortly before *Machi*. The speaker in the poem, a person who has drifted to a solitary island, confesses to thinking only about their first-person self rather than food or rescue.

> ***Solitary island.***
> ***The dark blue sea and sky stretching all around.***
> ***Countless stars fleeting in a moment.***
> ***An old, well-used shakuhachi (flute) at my side.***
> ***Listening to the sound of the waves and the sea breeze.***
> ***The only things I can think of in that situation are***
> ***not tomorrow's food, not a thread of rescue, and certainly not improving my shakuhachi playing technique.***
> ***It is only my first-person self.***
> [From Himarayairuka, "As Eternal as Heaven and Earth" (天壌無窮), July 29, 2003]

Since there is no one else around, the speaker of the poem confesses to only having thoughts of their "I" (first person). The Youth in *Machi* was likely in the same situation as the poem's speaker: he only knew the first-person "watashi" ("I") and lacked a name by which he could be called in the third person, leading him to ask the Grim Reaper, "Who am I?"

However, the Youth is given the name Hamayū by the Grim Reaper. If being nameless was a metaphor for isolation, then being given a name is a symbol of having one's existence affirmed by an Other. By being granted the name Hamayū, the Youth is rescued from his solitary, castaway-like state and becomes able to interact with others.

Philanthropy is the philosophy of hoping that love is shared with all people, bringing happiness to everyone. In expressing this philosophy, Arawi conceived of the Youth—a person who had severed ties with society—as the individual least likely to receive love. The fact that this Youth is saved, symbolized by the act of being called by a name, suggests that philanthropy has reached even the most isolated individual.

Hands Intertwine, The World Changes

Let's review the story and theme of *Machi* once more.

Arawi conceived Machi as a "leisurely gag manga," a shift in genre from his previous works. However, as the story expanded, absurd elements were introduced, leading to a unique style that would later be inherited by *Nichijou.*

Furthermore, as the ultimate conclusion of the alterity theme developed in Hane, Arawi had come to believe that happiness should reach all others without discrimination. This led to the theme of philanthropy being woven into the narrative of *Machi.*

The Girl, who was struggling with her crush on Senpai, has her wish fulfilled through the intervention of God. It is suggested that the Girl, grateful for God's unreciprocated love and kindness, will now share the kindness she received with those around her.

The Youth, meeting the Grim Reaper, is given the name Hamayū. Being given a name symbolizes having one's existence affirmed by an Other, suggesting that the Youth can now receive love and happiness.

> ***Machi is my second favorite manga that I've drawn.***
> ***People, a robot, God, a Grim Reaper.***
> ***In a world where race and world don't matter a bit,***
> ***it's a manga where everyone finds happiness in their own way.***
> ***Like, "Philanthropy is wonderful!"***
> ***The fact that the readers don't get the message at all is what makes it funny.***
> [From Himarayairuka, January 17, 2005]

The core message of *Machi* is encapsulated in the following phrase: "Days flow in order to achieve the greatest humor," and "Humans are destined to be happy." To achieve this belief, Arawi continued to create works—both in *Machi* and in his later commercial manga—that were absurd but led the characters to happy endings.

> ***Days flow in order to achieve***
> ***the greatest humor.***
> ***Humans are destined to be happy!***
> [From Himarayairuka, "How to Find a Good Loop" (いかに良いループを見つけるか), August 29, 2003]

Finally, in relation to the theme of philanthropy, we must look at a poem Arawi published in 2013, ten years after *Machi*, titled "□/■." This poem is thought to be inspired by Michael Jackson's song "Man in the Mirror," with the words spun from the music video [4].

Darkness
People shouting
People crying
People falling
Raising a fist
Feet spinning
Tens of thousands of people's fists answering it
Spreading hands
Gandhi
Fists raised like a meadow
Kennedy
Martin Luther King Jr.
Spinning, spinning
Black hands
White hands
Intertwining hands
Mother Teresa
Countless refugees
Changing world
Spinning world
Light
Shouting people
John Lennon
Spreading hands
Fading light
[From Tumblr, "□/■," August 10, 2013]

The "Man in the Mirror" video clip was created by splicing together American news footage. It features what could be called the negative history of humanity—war, racial discrimination, and environmental destruction—symbolized by images of people suffering from poverty, refugees, the KKK, and Adolf Hitler. Interspersed are images of people shouting in anger, crying quietly, and collapsing in death as they face the world's distress. The title "□/■" visually represents the White and Black races, a continued source of racial tension.

However, the music video also includes footage of activists who stood up to this tragic world: Mahatma Gandhi, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., Mother Teresa, and John Lennon. They are shown as symbols of philanthropy, striving to eliminate conflict among people.

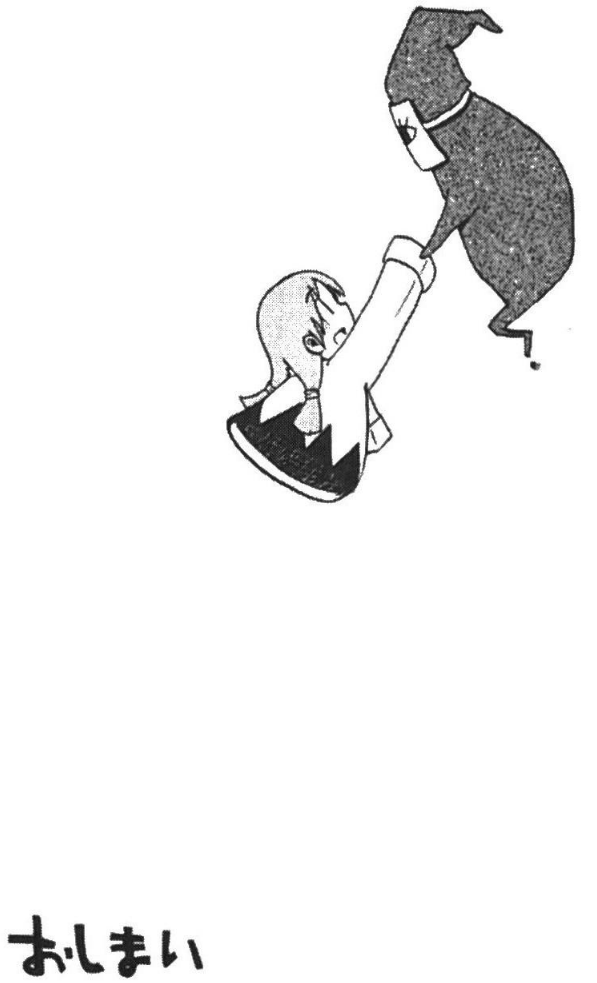
The video then shifts to imagery that conveys peace and hope, with the screen filling with children surrounding Michael, raising their arms in peace signs.

"Raising a fist, tens of thousands of people's fists answering it, fists raised like a meadow." Drawing inspiration from "Man in the Mirror," Arawi envisions a world of philanthropy that can overcome humanity's negative history. "Spinning, spinning, black hands, white hands, intertwining hands, changing world, spinning world." The image unfolding in the poem is of a world that transcends race, borders, and religion, a world where "everyone can find happiness in their own way."

Machi is a gag manga, but what it expresses is a Utopia where "race and world don't matter a bit" and where "humans are destined to be happy." It is set up as an ideal world where all beings are affirmed by the spirit of philanthropy and can live happily.

The story concludes with God and the Grim Reaper, who fulfilled the wishes of the Girl and the Youth, returning to the heavens hand-in-hand. The sight of these two seemingly incompatible entities taking each other's hands and heading to the same place is the ultimate expression of philanthropy.

Black hands, white hands, intertwining hands, changing world, spinning world—the world of Utopia that Arawi wanted to express is symbolically captured in *Machi*.



From *Machi*, page 16: God and the Grim Reaper, who had helped the Girl and Hamayū respectively, returned to the heavens hand-in-hand.

---

[1]. See Himarayairuka, November 12 and 16, 2003.

[2]. See also Himarayairuka, "Tengoku Café," September 22, 2003, where he mentions the lyrics of "Eien Naru Mono" (永遠なるもの, "The Eternal"). " 'My life has turned into a rose-colored one'—that voice, isn't that Masuo-san (a character from the long-running Japanese anime series, *Sazae-san*)'s voice?"

[3]. In *CITY* Volume 13, a character running for mayor includes the promise to "turn the faucet into a drink bar" in his platform. Just as the Youth in *Machi* wished for "cola from the faucet," this scene in the pompous setting of a mayoral election evokes laughter by promising the realization of a silly yet romantic idea. Arawi also mentioned *Machi* on his blog in connection with the Doraemon secret gadget "Dokodemo Jāguchi" (どこでも蛇口, "Anywhere Faucet").

He recalled the Youth's wish because the Doraemon gadget had the function of dispensing cola from the faucet. See kumomadori blog, "Clap" (拍手), November 16, 2006. "'And if Doraemon were here, we'd have the popular 'cola from the faucet,' after all.' Arawi: 'Come to think of it, I remember using that when I drew the manga *Machi* a long time ago.'"

[4]. Arawi also post on Twitter on November 27, 2012, a year before writing "□/■," that "Man in the Mirror has been stuck in my head for the past few days!"

III. Himarayairuka #2

In 2004, Arawi, who had spent a year striving to become a manga artist, was enjoying the process of drawing manuscripts more than anyone. It was perhaps inevitable that he chose these very days as his subject matter; the web manga he began drawing alongside his Comitia entries was filled with essayistic elements.

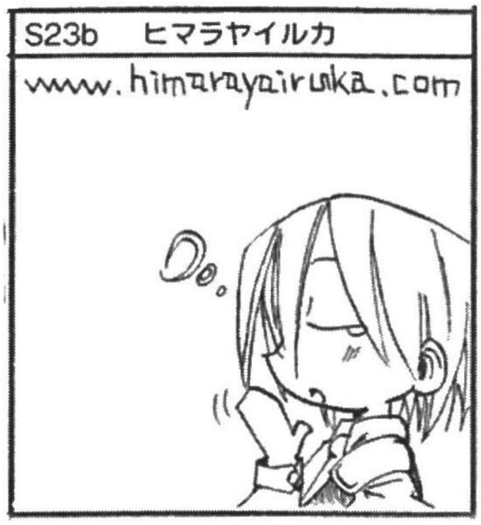
Simultaneously, however, he was also developing elements of absurd comedy. These two pillars—the essay and the absurd—became the catalyst for his intuitive creative process.

This section analyzes the works published between 2003 and 2004 under the keyword "Kūkūjakujaku": *Kokoro*, which inherited the challenging style of the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga"; *Helvetica Standard*, which would later become Arawi's life's work; and *Futsū*, which established an absurd worldview.

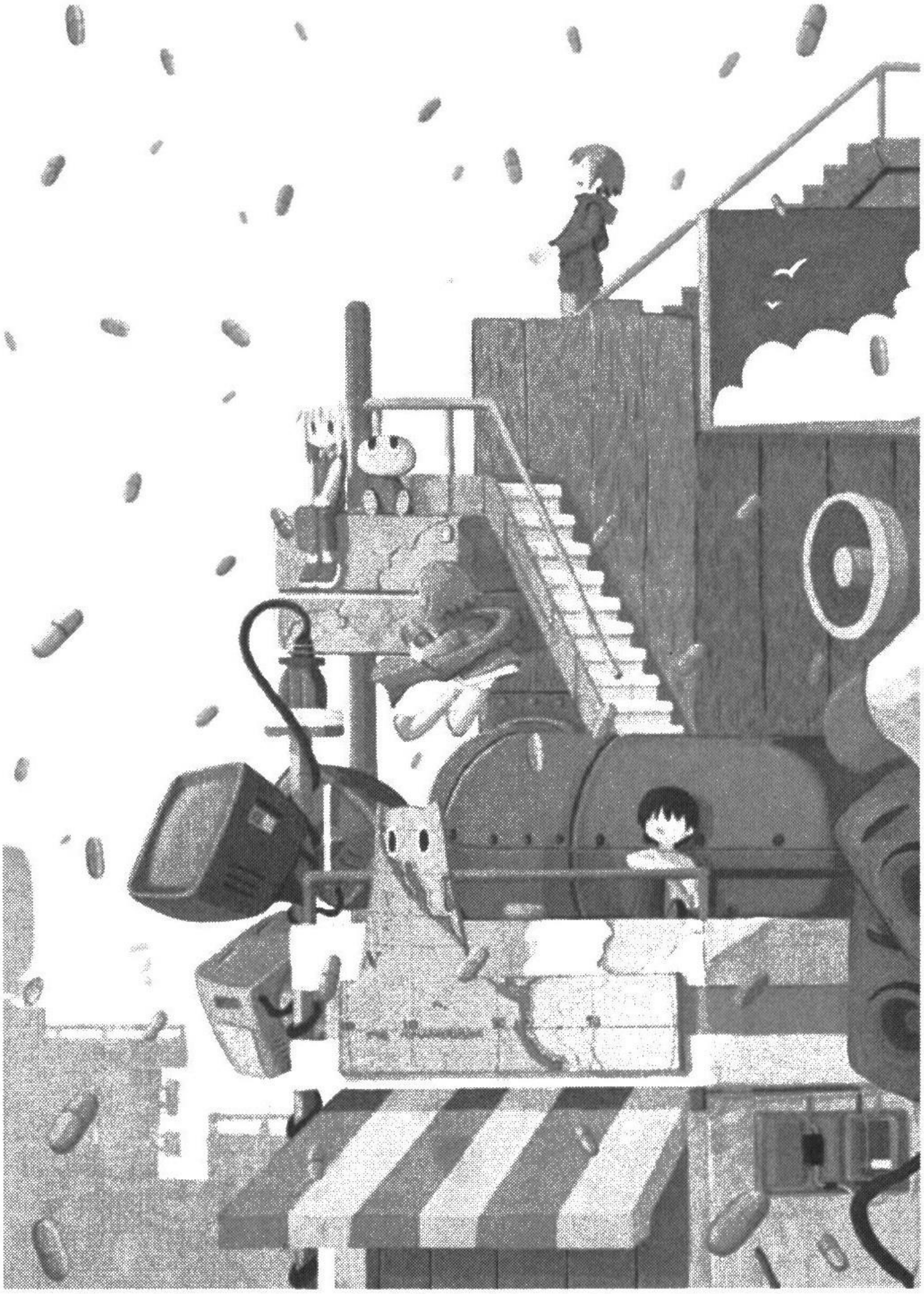
A Dream Continued on His Own Two Feet: Compilation Volume *Sasameyuki* (February 2004)

Sasameyuki (細雪, "Light Snow")

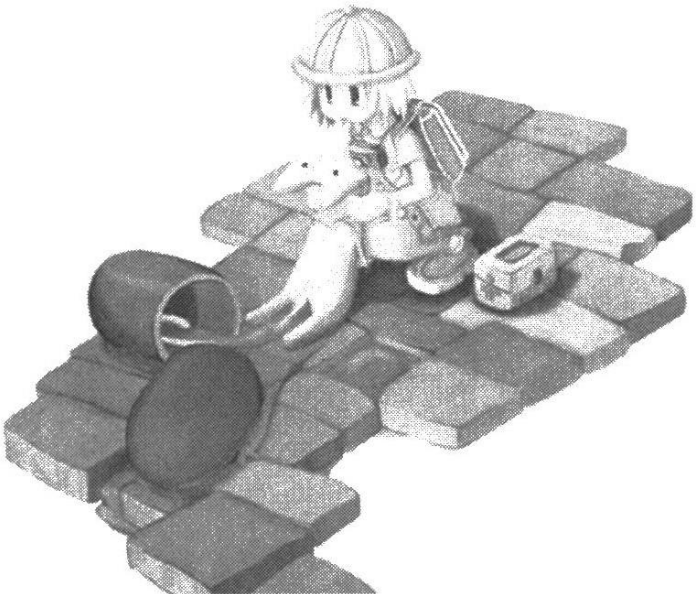
- February 22, 2004, at Comitia 67 (Circle Space S23b)
- Second Printing: May 4, 2004, at Comitia 68
- Second Printing: May 30, 2004, at Kansai Comitia 24
- Mail order of the Second Printing conducted via Himarayairuka starting June 5, 2004
- Re-recorded in the order: *Machi*, *Shiawase no Kakudo*, *Hakoniwa*, *Hane*
- Offset printing (Printer: Sunrise), A5 size, 76 pages total, Circle Name: Himarayairuka



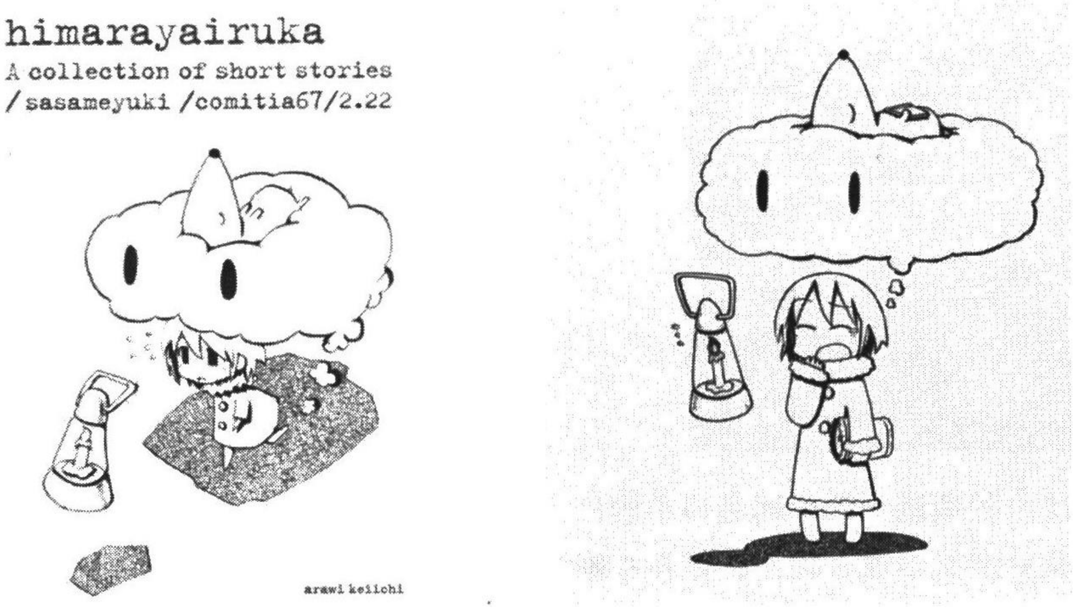
Himarayairuka Circle Cut published in *Tia's Magazine 67*.



Cover Illustration for *Sasameyuki*: The title is derived from Jun'ichirō Tanizaki's novel of the same name. However, Arawi adopted an original idea, interpreting *Sasameyuki* literally as thin, long snow, and depicting thin, long capsule pills falling like snow.



Back Cover Illustration for *Sasameyuki*.


himarayairuka
A collection of short stories
/sasameyuki /comitia67/2.22
arawi keiichi

Left: Flyer Illustration for the 2004 release of *Sasameyuki*.
Right: Remake of the Flyer Illustration for the 2014 release of *Sasameyuki*.

Relating to *Manga Michi*

The self-produced manga—*Shiawase no Kakudo*, *Hakoniwa*, *Hane*, and *Machi*—all contained complex themes whose true meaning was not easily grasped. In Section II, we deciphered these works using external references: the creative works that influenced Arawi at the time and the writings where he articulated his thoughts.

In the upcoming Section III: Himarayairuka #2, we will continue to analyze his creations and unravel the context of their formation to explore the unique character of his work.

As discussed in the section on *Hakoniwa*, Arawi was heavily influenced by the magazine *Monthly Manga Garo* and Genpei Akasegawa's *Chōkagaku Kamishibai* published within it during the first half of 2003.

His interest then shifted to manga created before the 1970s, which is evident from his website entries at the time. On Himarayairuka, he wrote about being moved by Osamu Tezuka's *Hi no Tori* (Phoenix) and collecting Shigeru Mizuki's manga [1].

Furthermore, he became interested in the works of artists who belonged to the Tokiwa-sō (トキワ荘) apartment complex. Tokiwa-sō, which once stood in Toshima Ward, Tokyo, is famous as the apartment where numerous masters of manga history gathered during the 1950s and 1960s. Led by Osamu Tezuka, figures like Fujiko F. Fujio, Fujiko Fujio A, Hiro'o Terada, Shotarō Ishinomori, and Fujio Akatsuka spent their youth there, making Tokiwa-sō a symbol of the dawn of post-war Japanese manga culture.

> ***After coming to Tokyo, I started reading old manga. A friend lent me an omnibus book of 70s manga, and I read Genpei Akasegawa's manga inside and thought, "What is this!" I dug up the contemporary Garo that published that manga, and then I kept digging further back, reading the manga from the Tokiwa-sō era.***
> [From *Studio Voice*, "Keiichi Arawi: Off-the-Charts, Otherworldly Creativity!," January 2008 issue]

As Arawi delved into the works of the Tokiwa-sō artists, he encountered a work that would have a definitive impact on his later life: Fujiko Fujio A's manga, *Manga Michi* (まんが道, "The Way of Manga").

Manga Michi is a semi-autobiographical work that depicts the youth of two young men, Michio Manga (満賀道雄) and Shigeru Saino (才野茂), modeled after Fujiko Fujio A and Fujiko F. Fujio. Stunned by Tezuka's manga *Shin Takarajima* (新寶島, "New Treasure Island"), Manga and Saino move from their hometown to Tokyo and begin their careers as aspiring manga artists.

However, their path to becoming professional manga artists is anything but smooth. The work recounts the troubled youth of the two men, who would later become titans of the manga world. Manga and Saino were depicted as ordinary young men, grappling with relationship issues in their real lives and tormented by the difficulty of creative work not progressing as desired.

The profound impact *Manga Michi* had on Arawi lay precisely here: the fact that future masters had endured a youth full of both joy and hardship. If even the great manga artists were once just ordinary young men, then he, an unknown at the time, could surely become a professional manga artist if he persisted in his training. *Manga Michi* spurred him on with this encouragement.

> ***When I start drawing manga after work, the clock inevitably spins late into the night, and I go to the office the next day severely exhausted. [...]*** [2]
> ***"What on earth should I draw?"***
> ***"What are the artists in the various manga magazines thinking about when they draw?"***
> ***"Is there a fundamental difference between what a manga artist eats and what I eat, and is a manga artist created by the error that arises from that difference?"***
> ***"Is a manga artist actually an imaginary creature?"***
> ***"Are they a Qilin?"***
> ***The manga I encountered when these thoughts began swirling in my head was Manga Michi.***
> ***To my surprise, the people in Manga Michi, excluding Tezuka-sensei, were all depicted as human beings.***
> ***The realization that "even the great manga artists are human" was, for me, a memory that brought me to tears with joy.***
> [From "Manga Michi to" in *Manga Michi*, Shogakukan Gamanga Books Edition, Volume 6]

While Arawi enjoyed his life of drawing manga, he was simultaneously anxious about his future. It was only natural for a young man in his mid-twenties to worry about whether he could truly become a professional manga artist at this pace.

However, through *Manga Michi*, he realized there was no fundamental difference between himself and the professional manga artists he had regarded as being on a different plane [3]. This conviction allowed him to believe that the path to becoming a manga artist was open to him, enabling him to continue his creative activities faithfully.

In the latter half of *Manga Michi*, Manga and Saino move into Tokiwa-sō, as happened historically. They spent their days exchanging ideas and learning from the contemporary manga artists who resided there.

Arawi, who related strongly to Manga and Saino, developed a powerful longing for life at Tokiwa-sō. This led him to take a drastic step: to move into an apartment resembling Tokiwa-sō to relive the world of *Manga Michi* [4].

In December 2003, he found the perfect property: Wakaba Heights, an apartment in Asagaya, the town adjacent to his then-residence in Kōenji. Arawi immediately vacated his current home and relocated to Wakaba Heights.

While Wakaba Heights was conveniently located just a five-minute walk from Asagaya Station, it was a "dilapidated apartment" with poor sunlight, a major drawback that quickly led to mold growing on the tatami mats. Nonetheless, the antiquity of Wakaba Heights was actually appealing, as it was reminiscent of the wood-frame, mortar, and tatami-floored building of Tokiwa-sō.

> ***(How long did I live in Wakaba Heights?) Maybe 3 to 4 years. But I really loved living in a dilapidated apartment like that, going to work after an all-nighter, and drawing manga. It really felt like I was "playing Tokiwa-sō." I actively looked for a place like Tokiwa-sō, you know. Since I was properly going to the company, I could have afforded a nicer place. [...] I must have been caught up in the romance of it. Well, if it were too tough, I would have quit (laughs).***
> [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]

Having started his new life at Wakaba Heights, Arawi felt entirely like a member of Tokiwa-sō. And with his renewed desire to become a professional manga artist, he became even more absorbed in drawing manga.

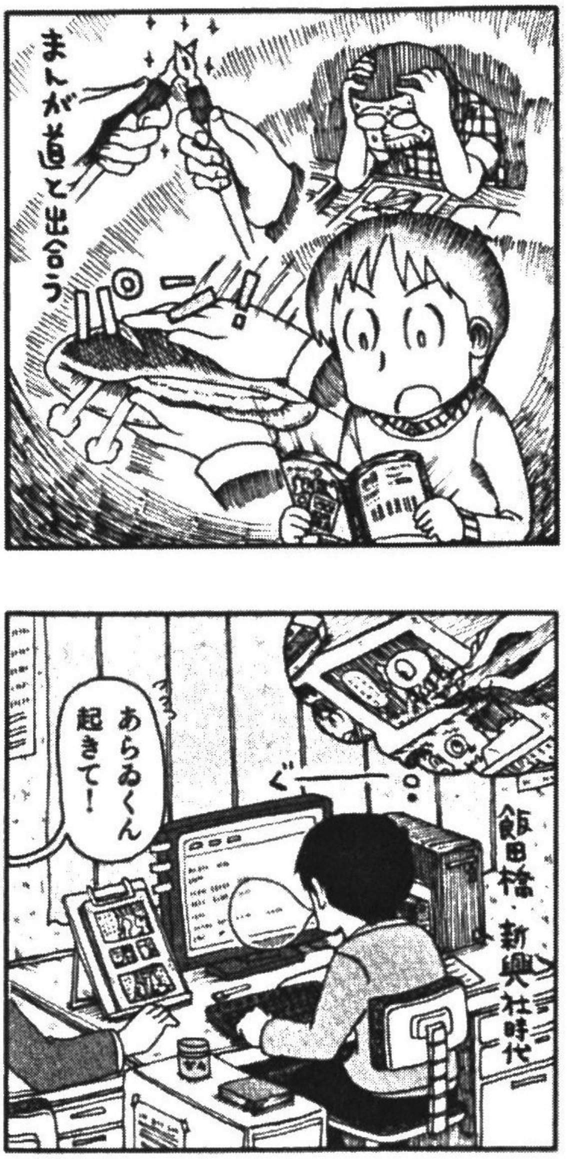

パー
まんが道と出会う
飯田橋・新興社時代
ぐーー。
あらゐくん起きて！

Illustration from "Manga Michi to" in Fujiko Fujio A's *Manga Michi*, Shogakukan Gamanga Books Edition, Volume 6.

To the World He Widely and Passionately Longed For

In 2004, after moving into Wakaba Heights, Arawi watched the film *Tokiwa-sō no Seishun* (トキワ荘の青春, "The Tokiwa-sō Story"). This film, centered on Hiro'o Terada, one of the residents of Tokiwa-sō, portrayed the lives of aspiring manga artists from a different perspective than *Manga Michi*.

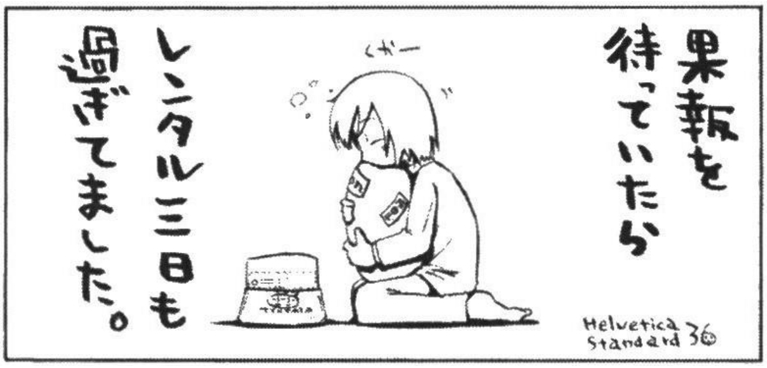
Terada, who was admired as a mentor by the manga artists gathered at Tokiwa-sō, gained popularity in the late 1950s with children's manga featuring sports themes. However, immediately after, the Gekiga (劇画, "dramatic picture") style for adults swept the manga industry, causing him to feel a growing divergence between his artistic ideals and popular trends.

Tokiwa-sō no Seishun depicts Terada's sincere dedication to drawing children's manga, unwavering in his conviction despite being tossed about by the times. Yet, his efforts are unrewarded, leading to a bittersweet ending where he puts down his pen and leaves Tokiwa-sō alone [5]. Nevertheless, the film's atmosphere is not somber. This is because it tenderly portrays the warm, nostalgic atmosphere of the Shōwa-era townscape and the daily interactions Terada shared with his manga artist colleagues at Tokiwa-sō.

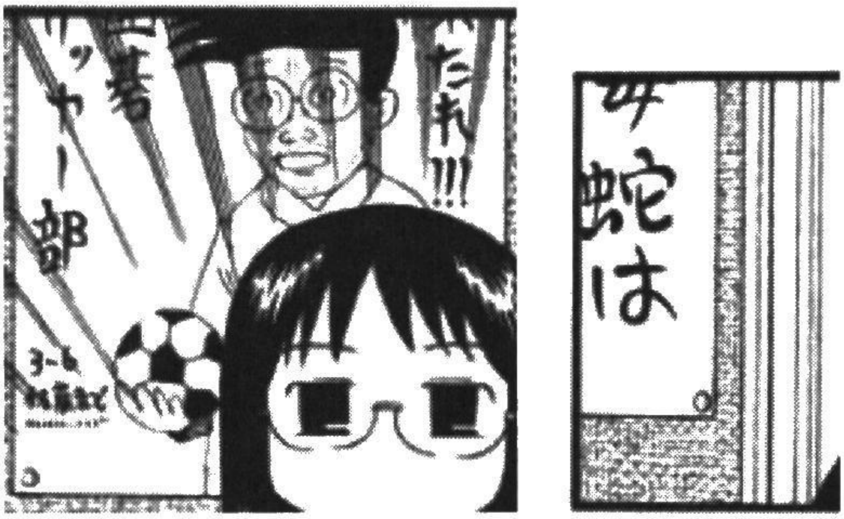
The film concludes with Terada, who has left Tokiwa-sō, being thanked by a young baseball player he coincidentally meets. This boy is reminiscent of the protagonist of Terada's representative work, *Sebangō 0* (背番号 0, "Jersey Number 0"). The final scene thus symbolizes the depth of Terada's love for manga, to the extent that he was thanked by a character from his own work.

Arawi was deeply moved by the story and the lyrical atmosphere of *Tokiwa-sō no Seishun* [6], and he learned about the aesthetics of creation. Terada's earnest sincerity in the film, refusing to compromise his ideals, became a source of strength for Arawi, alongside *Manga Michi*, as he aimed to become a professional manga artist.

> ***When I lived in Wakaba Heights, I constantly played Tokiwa-sō no Seishun on the TV. I would rent the VHS tape at Tsutaya, return it, and then borrow it again, in a continuous cycle. I often forgot to return it, and I'd end up paying late fees. It was delayed so often that I was once told it would be cheaper just to buy it.*** [From an interview for this book]


果報を
待っていたら
くがー
レンタル三日も
過ぎてました。
Helvetica Standard 36

From *Helvetica Standard* Chapter 36: The act of forgetting to return a rented VHS tape from Tsutaya was also mentioned in the work. The meaning of text: "I was so busy waiting for good fortune to arrive that I slept through the three-day rental period."



From page 118 of *Nichijou* Volume 1: An homage to *Manga Michi* can be seen in the background poster. The man holding a soccer ball on the left is Ichirō Henki, a character from *Manga Michi*, and the maxim on the right, "Dokuhebi wa Isoganai" (毒蛇はいそがない, "Poisonous snakes do not hurry"), was also a catchphrase that appeared in the work.

Inspired by *Manga Michi* and *Tokiwa-sō no Seishun*, Arawi drew parallels between himself and the aspiring manga artists like Terada. Arawi had previously felt he lacked peers with whom he could genuinely share the joys and hardships of creative work. However, by empathizing with the young artists of Tokiwa-sō and developing a sense of camaraderie, he said he was able to "enjoy a belated youth."

> ***When drawing manga and feeling sleepy, I would look at the all-nighter scenes in Manga Michi to re-motivate myself. After finishing a manga, I'd have a solo midnight toast with Tudor (sparkling cider). When drawing manga in my room, I'd play Tokiwa-sō no Seishun as background music. I put songs featured in Tokiwa-sō no Seishun, such as Noboru Kirishima's "Mune no Furiko" (The Pendulum of the Heart) and Katsuhiko Haida's "Kirameku Seiza" (Twinkling Constellations), and Izumi Yukimura's "Que Sera, Sera," into an MP3 player (a fake iPod) and constantly listened to them on my commute to keep my spirits up [7]. When I felt sleepy at work, I would surreptitiously poke the back of my hand with the nib of a dip pen I kept hidden in my pocket, saying things like, "Yes! This is the pain!"—actions that looked terminal to an outsider. But the more I imitated the characters in Manga Michi, the happier I felt, as if I was getting closer to becoming a manga artist.***
>
> ***The reason I found enjoyment in drawing, in manga, and in the manga-drawing life itself, was because I was able to enjoy a belated youth alongside Manga Michi. [...] The "back view of drawing manga" featured in Manga Michi is still an image of myself, a friend by my side, and an aspiration.***
>
> [From "Manga Michi to" in *Manga Michi*, Shogakukan Gamanga Books Edition, Volume 6]

Even after becoming a professional manga artist, Arawi repeatedly rewatched *Tokiwa-sō no Seishun*, even listing it as his all-time favorite Japanese film [8]. Furthermore, he watched all the films directed by Jun Ichikawa, who directed the movie [9].

Encouraged by the manga artists of Tokiwa-sō, Arawi penned a poem. This poem heavily reflected his renewed resolve to become a professional manga artist.

> ***Years ago, at a different time,***
> ***I saw the same dream.***
> ***A wide, hot,***
> ***longed-for world.***
> ***That which fell from the sky***
> ***touched my body,***
> ***and sprouted from my right hand.***

The continuation of the dream,
on my own two feet.
[From the opening poem of *Sasameyuki*]

Arawi felt that the "wide, hot, longed-for world" stretched out before him, at the end of his dream to become a professional manga artist. Fueled by the influence of *Manga Michi* and *Tokiwa-sō no Seishun*, his passion to become a manga artist only intensified.

However, pursuing a dream is never an endeavor undertaken lightly. Moreover, Arawi had a history of giving up on the dream of becoming a manga artist many times during his school days. Although he "saw the same dream years ago, at a different time," his past experiences of early setbacks made him hesitate.

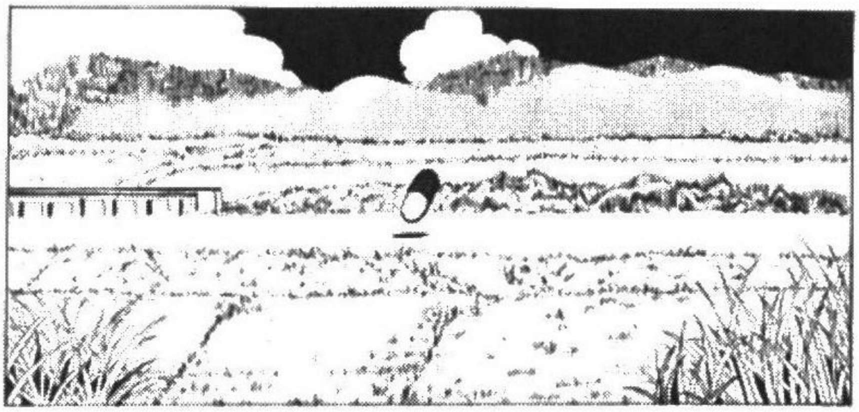
Yet, despite these experiences, Arawi once again picked up his pen and resolved to continue the "continuation of the dream, on his own two feet." There was no guarantee that he would become a professional manga artist, and no one knew how the future would turn out. However, the lines in the poem, "That which fell from the sky" and "sprouted from my right hand," conveyed a quiet confidence.

The right hand is the hand that grips the pen, the part of the body that serves as the driving force for creating manga. Therefore, the sprout that emerged from his right hand can be seen as a symbol of his manga skills and passion, which were "growing" day by day. In other words, he felt that his ability as a manga artist, though merely a small sprout now, held the potential to eventually grow into a great tree. That is why he expressed in the poem that a sprout had grown from his right hand.

Arawi felt a clear sense of progress in his creative activities over the past year. He decided to publish a compilation volume that re-recorded his four works from 2003, featuring this poem at the beginning. The result was the omnibus *Sasameyuki*, published at Comitia 67 in February 2004.

His previous works distributed at Comitia were all handmade copybooks, created with copy paper and cardboard. In contrast, *Sasameyuki* was his first offset-printed book, produced by a printing company. It is easy to imagine the great emotion he felt upon holding a collected volume with a binding close to that of a commercial publication. He felt confident that he was gradually moving closer to the dream of becoming a professional manga artist, which had once seemed so distant.

With the publication of *Sasameyuki*, Arawi confirmed the trajectory he had followed over the past year and affirmed his decision to walk the "continuation of the dream, on his own two feet." Following the release of *Sasameyuki*, he continued his path as a manga artist, nurturing the sprout that had grown from his right hand into a great tree.



何年か前に　違う日時に
同じ夢を見た
広く　暑く
憧がれていた世界
空から降ってきたソレは
自分の体にふれ
自分の右手から芽を生やした

夢の続きを
自分の足で。

Opening Poem of *Sasameyuki*.

---

[1]. See Himarayairuka, June 14 and August 11, 2003. He recorded the following impression of Osamu Tezuka's *Hi no Tori*: *"Read Hi no Tori again after a long time and was overwhelmed. Lost in thought. Shuddered upon realizing there's not a single wasted panel. Or perhaps it's chakra. A flow like the wind. Needless to say."*

[2]. The quoted text states that Arawi encountered *Manga Michi* while continually bringing his self-produced manga to publishers. However, he seems to have actually started making submissions in 2005, after reading *Manga Michi*. It is likely that the timeline of meeting Manga Michi and submitting to publishers was reversed in the quote for the sake of clarity.

[3]. In the *Nichijou* chapter "Ningen longing" (Human Longing) on page 76 (collected in Volume X), there is a scene pointing out that writers who are respected by everyone "I think they're all just normal people, you know." This line reflects Arawi's experience of realizing from Manga Michi that "even the great manga artists are human."

[4]. Historically, Terada put down his pen after leaving Tokiwa-sō. However, *Tokiwa-sō no Seishun* incorporates fiction, conflating his departure from Tokiwa-sō with the failure of his manga career.

[5]. Arawi tweeted on January 28, 2012, that upon watching the anime *Nichijou* Episode 52 (collected in Volume 3), *"I think this episode was drawn after I saw Hiro'o Terada's Sebangō 0 and thought, 'A pastoral baseball manga is nice.'"* Episode 52 is an anecdote where the characters have fun pretending to play baseball in an empty lot.

[6]. Arawi still says that when he hears the insert songs from *Tokiwa-sō no Seishun*, it reminds him of around 2004, and he feels motivated, thinking, "Ah, I must draw" [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]. The popular songs used in the film included: Katsuhiko Haida's "Kirameku Seiza" (燦めく星座, "Twinkling Constellations") (1940) and "Tōkyō no Yane no Shita" (東京の屋根の下, "Under the Roofs of Tokyo") (1948); Noboru Kirishima's "Mune no Furiko" (胸の振子, "The Pendulum of the Heart") (1947); NHK's *Minna no Uta* (みんなのうた, "Songs for Everyone") "Shiawase no Uta" (しあわせの歌, "Song of Happiness") (1984); and Izumi Yukimura's "Que Sera, Sera" (ケセラセラ) (1956).

[7]. Refer to the survey postcard included with the first edition of *Nichijou* Volume 4.

[8]. See kumomadori blog, "Tobacco Smoke and Entangled Feelings" (煙草の煙りも 縺れる思い), May 22, 2007, and "It's Going to be Eternal Peace" (永遠に天下太平なんだ) February 19, 2008. *"I impulsively bought works by director Jun Ichikawa. What do you mean Tokiwa-sō no Seishun hasn't been released on DVD? I obtained Tokiwa-sō Seishun Monogatari at a used bookstore. It cost three times the normal price... Reading Terada-san's autobiographical manga of Tokiwa-sō included in it, and recalling the ending of The Tokiwa-sō Story, I felt a little melancholic. After reading, I suddenly opened i-tune and listened to 'Mune no Furiko.' Melancholic." "I'd wanted to see 'Taiheiyō Hitori Botchi' (太平洋ひとりぼっち, "Alone Across the Pacific") for a long time, but then Kon Ichikawa passed away. Thinking it might be some kind of revelation, I immediately purchased it. When I mentioned it to a colleague at work, they said, 'It's a shame if that's the first Kon Ichikawa work you see.' 'What!' I thought, and retorted, 'I've seen all of Jun Ichikawa's works!' but was completely ignored. Well, now I have no choice but to watch them all!"*

Universal and Unchanging Art Style #1: *Anonymous* (September 2003)

Tomograph no Kaze (トモグラフの風, "The Wind of Tomograph")

- Ver.0 released on Himarayairuka on March 10, 2003.
- B1 released on Himarayairuka around January–February 2004.

Anonymous (アノニマス)

- Worldview concept initiation on Himarayairuka on September 13, 2003.
- Fragments of the setting released on Himarayairuka on September 13–15, 17–18, and 21, 2003.
- Project interrupted, left unfinished, around October 2003.

Universal and Unchanging, Untainted by Trends

Up to this point, we have primarily delved into the philosophy and themes discernible in Arawi's manga. Now, we'll shift our focus to an analysis of his art style.

Between 2002 and the first half of 2003, Arawi learned the techniques for drawing cute girls and coloring from the illustrations of Kiyohiko Azuma and Takehito Harada. However, the period during which he imitated their styles was not long. He realized that if he wanted to become a professional manga artist, he had to find a unique style that didn't remain a mere imitation of others.

Yet, a personal style can't be established overnight. It was clear that a satisfying art style could only be formed through continuously drawing manga and illustrations, day and night, guided by an intangible feeling of "somehow liking."

Arawi found a clue to the style he should pursue early on. In August 2003, a key to his artistic ideal was hidden in an essay collection he happened to pick up: *Yanagi Sōri Essay* (柳宗理エッセイ, "Sōri Yanagi Essay").

> ***Sōri Yanagi. In his essays, he wrote something like, "I feel something universal in folk crafts," and that resonated with me. While things that reflect the times are good, I learned from Yanagi's work that things that don't break down even as the times change are what truly move people. It might be from this point that I began to think about "universality" in my own drawings.*** [From an interview for this book]

Sōri Yanagi's profession was product designer. However, Yanagi held the paradoxical ideal of "design without designer involvement."

Yanagi felt that contemporary designers were preoccupied with short-term profit, constantly releasing products based on current trends. In contrast, he valued folk crafts (mingeihin), practical items that people had used for generations. Although often sold as tourist souvenirs today, folk crafts were originally practical goods refined over generations by nameless artisans. Yanagi believed that because they were honed over a long period, folk crafts possessed a universal functional beauty.

True beauty, he argued, does not come from a single designer but is born naturally from a long tradition. Thus, all forms should learn from the process by which folk crafts were created. This was the true meaning behind Yanagi's call for design without designer involvement.

Arawi used Yanagi's stance as a reference when searching for his ideal art style. While Yanagi focused on objects, the idea of learning from tradition rather than trends could be applied to illustration. As a result, Arawi began to seek an art style that "doesn't break down even as the times change" rather than the latest art that "reflected the times."

As noted earlier, Arawi was actively absorbing manga from 1970s *Monthly Manga Garo* during this period and reading the works of the Tokiwa-sō artists that preceded it. His proactive engagement with manga published before his birth was likely an expression of his desire to gain universality from old traditions.

On Himarayairuka, a passage was quoted from Yanagi Sōri's essay "Design and Tradition," expressing a determination to aim for a style, like folk crafts, that would be loved for a long time, using tradition as his guide [1].

> ***Tradition exists for the sake of creation. Design without tradition and creation is impossible. The beauty of tradition is not something that can be consciously made. It is something that is born.*** [From Himarayairuka, "Sōri Yanagi," August 23, 2003]

Arawi's goal was an art style, like folk crafts, that would be accepted by readers even as the times changed. Was such a style possible? The answer was right under his nose: he realized that the key to achieving universality lay in the deformed expression that he had always favored.

> ***When you think about what remains in a simplified drawing, I think it's a universality that isn't influenced by trends. I wish I could achieve that kind of simplification. It's difficult to execute, because you have to reconcile your own work with your art style, or the story won't work. But I'm definitely drawn to the universality of simplified drawings.***

> [From Monthly MOE, "Special Interview: That Person's Picture Books," February 2014 issue]

Arawi's realization that the essence of deformation lies in "leaving only universality and omitting everything else" was sparked by Dick Bruna's picture books. Looking back at Bruna's color illustrations as an adult, Arawi was astonished by the simple lines and minimal color palette that held the entire page together. He identified Bruna as an ideal artist who displayed individuality through bold simplification while captivating readers regardless of contemporary trends.

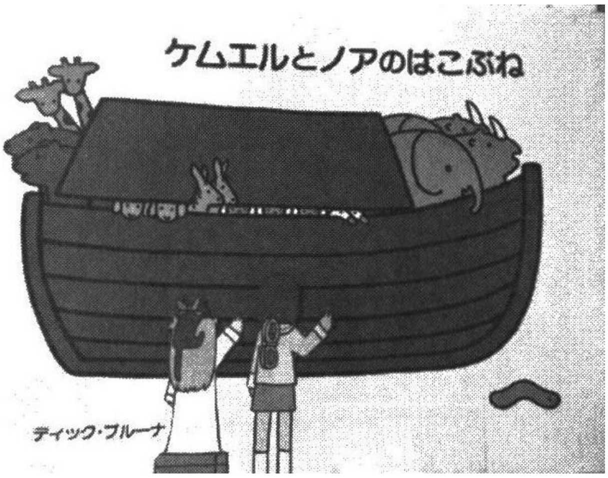
The two Bruna picture books that particularly impressed him were *Miffy and the New Baby* and *Caleb's Ride on Noah's Ark*.

> ***The animals in the picture book Caleb's Ride on Noah's Ark are also simple and charming. I often draw strange animal characters in my manga, and I think this book may be an influence. When I draw animals, I try to simplify them as much as possible to draw something that is my own, and I'd be happy if people thought, "Ah, is this animal by Arawi...?"***
> [From Monthly MOE, "Special Interview: That Person's Picture Books," February 2014 issue]

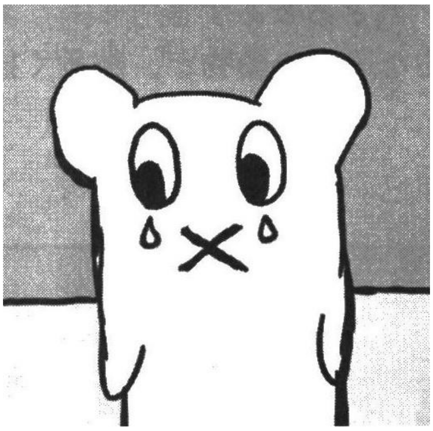
> ***(Bruna) might have influenced my color balance. When I color, I try to unify the colors, so all red is the same red, and all black is the same black. Even with a limited number of colors, the image surprisingly holds up. Also, I've always admired and longed for this simple coloring that has no unevenness. The way he simplifies his drawings is also irresistible. I thought it was amazing how the image holds strongly despite its simplicity.***
> [From Monthly MOE, "Special Interview: That Person's Picture Books," February 2014 issue]

Since childhood, Arawi had been captivated by the cheerful, deformed art styles of characters like Gunma-chan, Q-tarō, and Sanrio characters. The predilection for deformed expression was an unchanging one. Thus, the simplified expression that preserved only universality could also be described as an immutable expression.

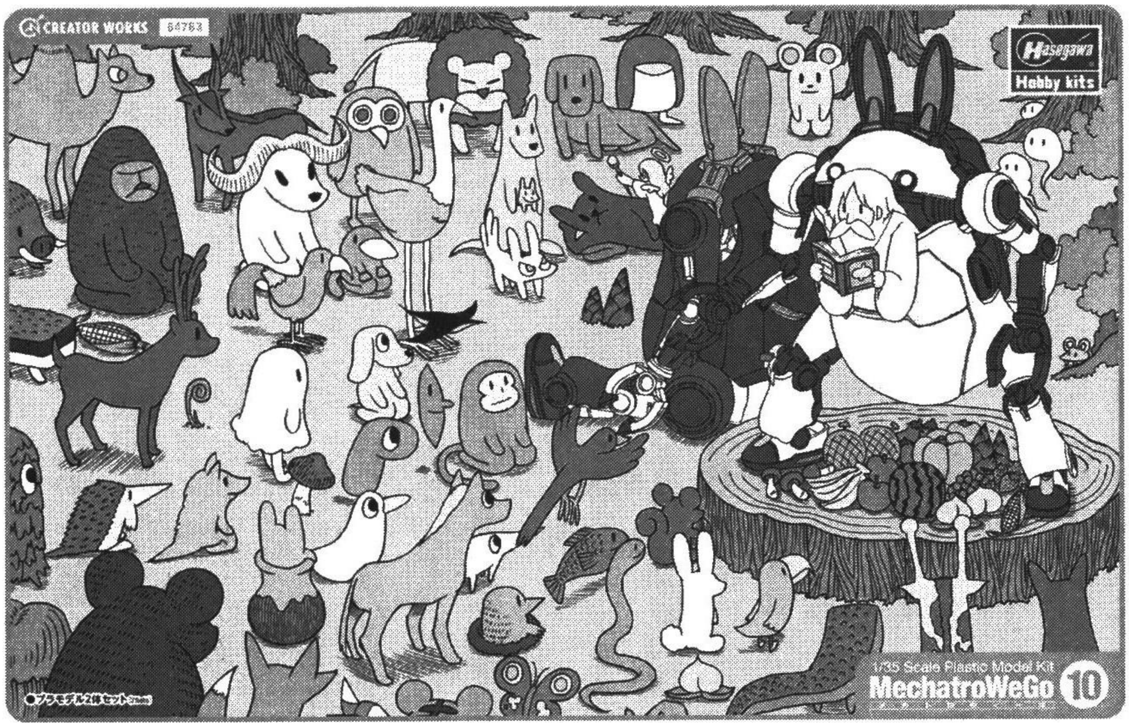
In the end, his ideal art style boiled down to a simple conclusion: he should just continue pursuing the style he had always loved. With newfound confidence, Arawi began to focus even more on the universal and unchanging deformed expression.



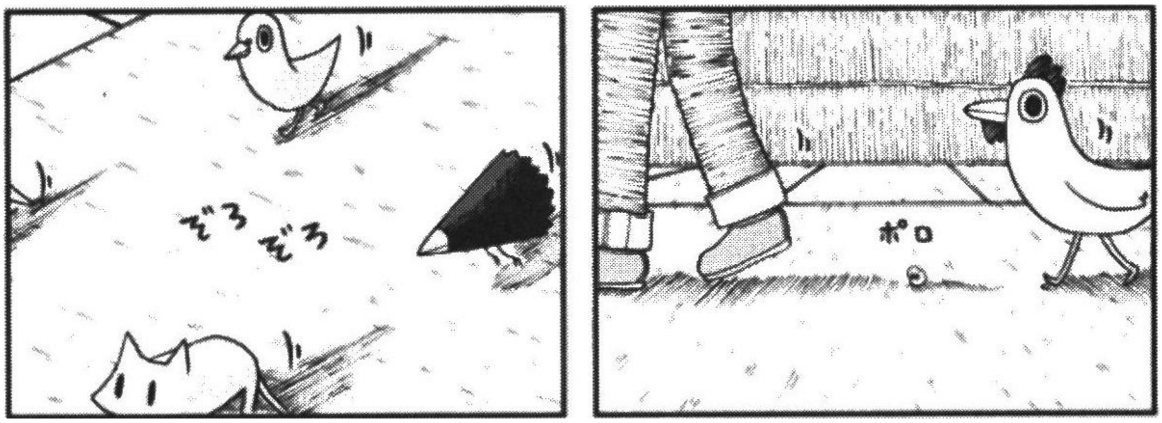
From Twitter post on February 18, 2017: A photo posted to mourn the passing of Dick Bruna. Cutout illustrations of Nano Shinonome and Hakase are placed on the cover of the picture book *Caleb's Ride on Noah's Ark*, making it look as though they are sending off the animals on the ark.



Arawi's Twitter icon, newly drawn the same day for the Dick Bruna tribute: The background uses the orange and yellow favored by Bruna, and the mouth in the self-portrait mimics Miffy's.


CREATOR WORKS
64763
Hasegawa
Hobby kits
1/35 Scale Plastic Model Kit
MechatroWeGo
10

Box art from "Mechatro WeGo No. 10 Animal 'Retro & Azuki'": Features numerous uniquely designed animals heavily deformed by Arawi.



From page 46 of *Nichijou* Volume 8.

Devising Charming Creature Designs

In August 2003, having completed his self-produced manga *Hane* the previous month, Arawi decided on a new challenge: creating a short animated film. The title he had in mind for this animation was *Anonymous*.

Given the timing, this title is likely derived from the *Sōri Yanagi Essay*, as Yanagi advocated for the concept of Anonymous Design within his writing [2]. Anonymous Design refers to the kind of design, like folk crafts, that is refined over a long period by nameless (anonymous) creators. Yanagi was seeking the possibility of true beauty, distinct from modern design that merely chases consumer appeal. He thus re-evaluated Anonymous Design, which was simple yet brimming with functional beauty.

While the coincidence in the title cannot be ruled out, it's certain that the word anonymous, as used by Yanagi, remained in the back of Arawi's mind.

A distinctive feature of *Anonymous* was that Arawi planned to create the animation using the old-school method of drawing each original frame by hand without using digital equipment. Arawi had previously released the Flash animation *Nantonaku* in July–August 2002 and the Movie Maker-produced clip *Tomograph no Kaze* [3] in March 2003. However, Anonymous reveals a plan for a much more serious animation project.

Arawi laid out the process, purchasing the necessary animation paper and a peg bar to hold the sheets in place, and began the animation process. However, the video production proved to be far more time-consuming than he expected, and with the next Comitia date approaching, he had to abandon the production of *Anonymous* while it was still incomplete. In a later interview, he mentioned that while he had worked out the concept in fine detail, he never finished it [4].

> ***Long ago, I decided to create a world.***
> ***The world's name was "anonymous."***
> ***The meaning is author unknown, anonymous.***
> ***I planned the climate, the inhabitants, and the specialties of that world,***
> ***and thought about making it into a five or six-minute animation eventually. But that project fizzled out.***

> ***I had been wanting to make an animation for a long time (since 2003), and I had bought specialized paper and a peg bar from an art supply store, but***
> ***my interest just kept shifting to something else.***
> ***I still hope to make it someday, like a music clip.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "【anonymous - アノニマス-】005," May 14, 2006]

> ***I bought a peg bar and animation paper, and I wanted to create moving pictures using analog methods. That was Anonymous. But before I could seriously start drawing, I got absorbed in manga, and I no longer had the time to work on it.*** [From an interview for this book]

Though the animation was never released, the idea behind *Anonymous* is noteworthy. Fragments of the work's settings were published on Himarayairuka. Referencing this information, we can infer that *Anonymous* was intended to be set in an alternate world and feature a multitude of fictional creatures.

Arawi was likely aiming to pursue universal design in this animation. Although the illustrations themselves are scattered, the project was ambitious, focusing on detailed characteristics and ecology of its imaginary creatures and dedicating significant effort to their visual design.

> ***9/13 New World "Anonymous"***
> ***I wanted to create a world. First, character production—enemy characters seem interesting.***
>
> ***9/14 "Kawadama-go" (皮玉子, Skin-Egg)***
> ***The world is Anonymous. A creature that is an egg wrapped in tough skin. Its personality is gentle. It is mainly raised for food. When the skin is peeled off, a beautiful egg appears. Its "inexpressible" taste captivates people. Also, its skin is very strong and highly flexible, and it is a popular decorative item for travelers.***
>
> ***9/18 Pera-Ryū (ペラ龍, Thin Dragon)***
> ***It's reputed to be very warm because it wraps around your body when you camp outdoors. By the way, the cape uses the skin of a "Kawadama-go."***

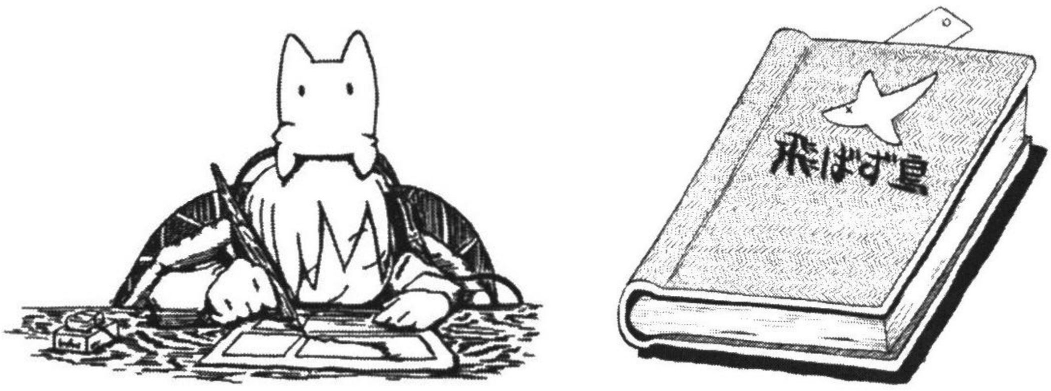
> ***9/21 Forest***
>
> ***This is Pera-Ryū. It's a summoned creature. Summoned creatures have balls attached to them. This one is the only creature that Tera-san can summon. It's warm to be wrapped in this thing. It's thin and flimsy (pera-pera). (Personally, I prefer the temporary Pera-Ryū below, so I'll make the temporary Pera-Ryū the Pera-Ryū's child.)***
>
> [From Himarayairuka, September 13–14, 18, 21, 2003]

In connection with *Anonymous*, Arawi created a number of unique mascot characters during the same period.

For instance, just before he started conceptualizing *Anonymous*, he drew Hanyū En-Kichirō Yasutada (羽生遠吉朗靖忠), a terrifying creature with a cute appearance that eats people. In October, he devised Tobazu Tori, a bird with an X-marked eye [5]. By November, he had created John Mark Ware, a box-shaped creature, alongside Senpai, the robot who appears in *Machi* [6].

> ***Hanyū En-Kichirō Yasutada. Also known as "Oniusagi" (Demon Rabbit).***
> ***It just loves to devour people.***
> ***It loves it more than its three meals a day.***
> ***Actually, that is its three meals a day!***
> ***If you carelessly approach it because it's cute, its big mouth will open with a GULP, and you'll be eaten!***
> ***Be careful!!*** [7]
> [From Himarayairuka, "Hanyū En-Kichirō Yasutada," August 26, 2003]

It is worth noting that all these creatures, despite their distinctive appearances, are composed of simple lines. The fictional creatures created for *Anonymous* and other concurrent projects should be viewed as the first steps toward the "universal and unchanging" deformed designs Arawi sought to create. After this, Arawi continued to devise one uniquely shaped creature after another.



Left: Illustration from the afterword of *Hane*: The creature Hanyū En-Kichirō Yasutada is sitting on the Girl's head.
Right: Illustration for "Literature of the First Half of March" (三月半の文学) included in "Himarayairuka Kamihanki Calendar 05 Seikatsu": Re-recorded in the *Helvetica Standard* compilation. An illustration of Tobazu Tori is featured on the book cover.

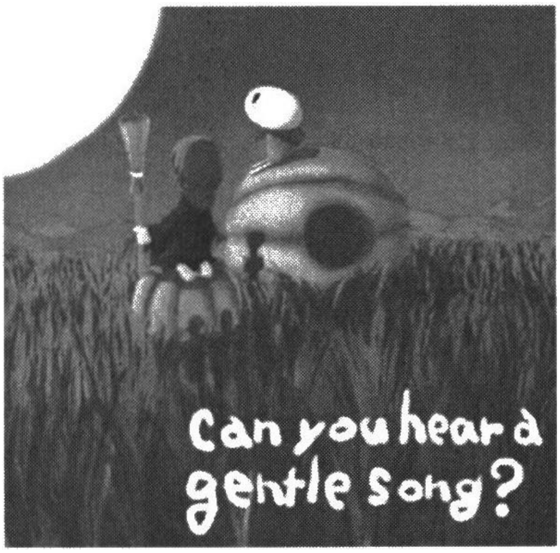

Can you hear a gentle song?

Illustration released on Himarayairuka around November 2003: In a Halloween theme, Senpai from *Machi* is sitting on a jack-o'-lantern with a Girl dressed as a witch.

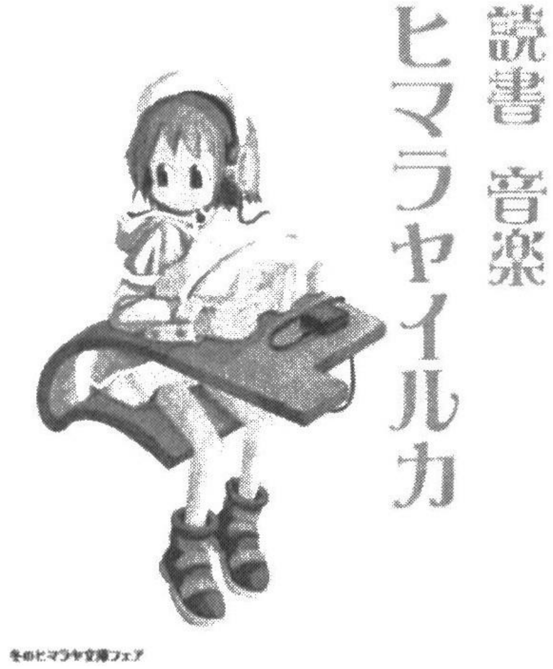
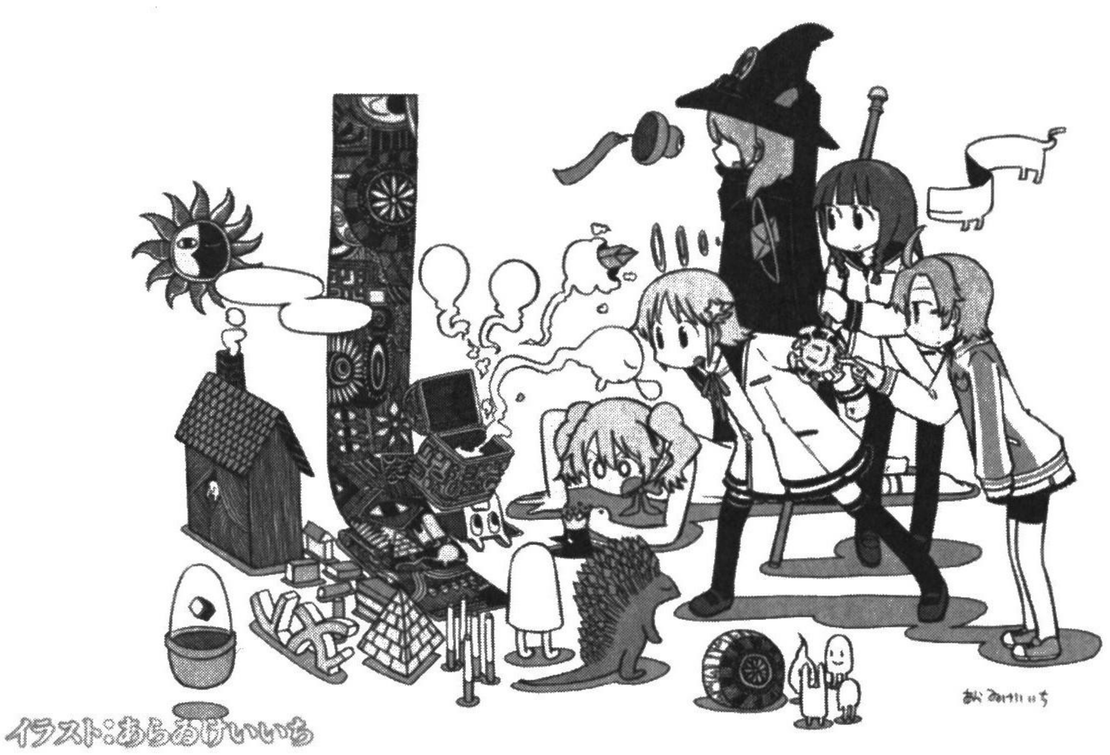

読書 音楽
ヒマラヤイルカ
冬のヒマラヤ文庫フェア

Illustration released on Himarayairuka around December 2003: A Girl is holding a paperback book printed with the Tobazu Tori character.


イラスト：あらいけいいち
あらいけいいち

End Card contributed to the anime *Wish Upon the Pleiades* Episode 3: The five characters from the anime are shown encountering creatures and objects devised by Arawi. The creature in the upper right appears to be the Pera-Ryū conceptualized for *Anonymous*.

---

[1]. In the essay manga "New Year's! A Series Filled with Things I Like #1" published in the February 2018 issue of *Monthly Newtype*, Arawi praised folk crafts as "a lump of universality and simplicity" and noted that he "collects them steadily." He specifically mentioned wanting a Hato-guruma (Pigeon Cart), a local specialty from Nagano Prefecture where wisteria vines are woven into the shape of a pigeon. This Hato-guruma also appeared in *CITY* Chapter 64.

In the essay "freedom one daruma." included in the free paper *shouwa. Ichi*, he expressed his affection for Daruma dolls, saying, *"I feel like 'something' is profoundly embedded in Japanese style and folk crafts. [...] Anyway, they are packed with lots of mysterious charm. It's the Daruma, plain and simple. What is it? No, what on earth IS it! What is this form? Why is it red? Why the beard? Why is it red? It's... it's terrifying, I tell you! Yes, it's terrifying. But there's something good about the terrifying thing. I don't know why, but there's something good. This 'something good' makes me love the form, the red color, and the beard—everything. It's mysterious. But I don't need many. Because it would be scary at night if I had too many at home. But I just like them. I like the sound of 'Daruma,' too. I just love it, and there's nothing I can do about it."*

[2]. Arawi recorded listening to the music unit anonymass's "opus01" on Himarayairuka on July 27, 2003. Thus, a possible source of inspiration for *Anonymous*, besides Anonymous Design, could have been the name anonymass.

[3]. Arawi released a four-second video, *Tomograph no Kaze* Ver. 0, on Himarayairuka on March 10, 2003. He later released "β1," which extended the video length to 30 seconds, in January–February 2004.

Arawi later spoke about the work in an interview for this book: *"'Tomograph no Kaze.' This was a work where I drew illustrations and added music and text using Movie Maker. I only had the image of 'a girl stranded on a solitary island' and 'a tower that appeared before her,' and I hadn't particularly thought about any other settings. But making it, I discovered that just adding music and text could create a rich atmosphere."*

Incidentally, tomograph refers to a sectional photographic apparatus used for X-ray examination (tomography) to photograph any part of the human body. Arawi may have learned about the tomograph from *Medical Asahi*, where he was serializing an illustration at the time, and cited the information in the title of his work.

[4]. Arawi's challenge to animation expression reignited in 2020 with the release of "Kaikō" (邂逅, "Encounter") on YouTube. While not directly related to Anonymous, it is astonishing that he began producing serious animations one after another after a lapse of about 17 years.

[5]. Arawi created a piece of desktop music titled Tobazu Tori and published it on Himarayairuka during the same period. Tobazu Tori is thought to have been drawn as the image character for his original song.

[6]. At the time of *Machi*'s publication, Arawi also conceived of characters named Bobiro, a robot with a different shape from Senpai, and a Black Cat, and he distributed handmade patches featuring these two characters at Comitia. See Himarayairuka, November 12, 2003.

[7]. Hanyū En-Kichirō Yasutada was initially conceived as a ferocious creature, but its violent side later subsided. It appeared in *Machi* as a stuffed toy being hugged by the Girl after she woke up, and later reappeared in *Helvetica Standard* "43" as a conversation partner for the Girl (Arawi's self-portrait).

Universal and Unchanging Art Style #2: *Futsū* (December 2003)

Futsū (ふつう, Ordinary)

- December 1, 2003: Chapter 1, "Galois's Quintic Equation" (ガロアの五次方程式), posted on Himarayairuka.
- December 16, 2003: Chapter 2, "Heaven Helps Those Who Help Themselves" (天は自ら助く者を助く), posted on Himarayairuka.
- 2 pages total (2 episodes per page)

Pop Shapes, A World Without "Ordinary"

Arawi's artistic ideal was to achieve universality, and his means of expression became a pursuit of simple lines. The deformed style was one he had "somehow liked" since childhood. Therefore, this choice of art style meant advancing further than ever along the path of expression he had believed in.

In accordance with his discovered aesthetic, he successively created deformed characters like the fictional creatures in *Anonymous*, Hanyū En-Kichirō Yasutada, and Tobazu Tori.

Arawi was fascinated by another subject at this time: the egg motif. For example, in Anonymous, the fictional creature Kawadama-go was an egg with a durable shell. Even before that, he had drawn an illustration titled "Tamago no Ko" (卵の子, "Child of the Egg") in which a child holds a large egg [1].

Furthermore, in 2019, the three-dimensional sculpture series Arawi Keiichi no Rittai (あらゐけいいちの立体, "Keiichi Arawi's Sculptures"), which he supervised, included "Yume Tamago" (ゆめたまご, "Dream Egg") as one of the products [2]. It's certain that the simple form of the egg held a captivating charm for him.

By extension, he was also drawn to the shape of the fried egg. He praised the fried egg as having "a really good form, pop, cute, and lovable," and frequently used it as a motif, notably starting with his "Author's Profile" in *Nichijou* Volume 1 [3].

Moreover, the composition of a character holding a fried egg in their mouth is often seen in Arawi's illustrations. This composition was used in *Nichijou* Volume 4's "Nichijou no Short 4" and the *Monthly Newtype* essay "Anime-banashi #3" [4], among others.

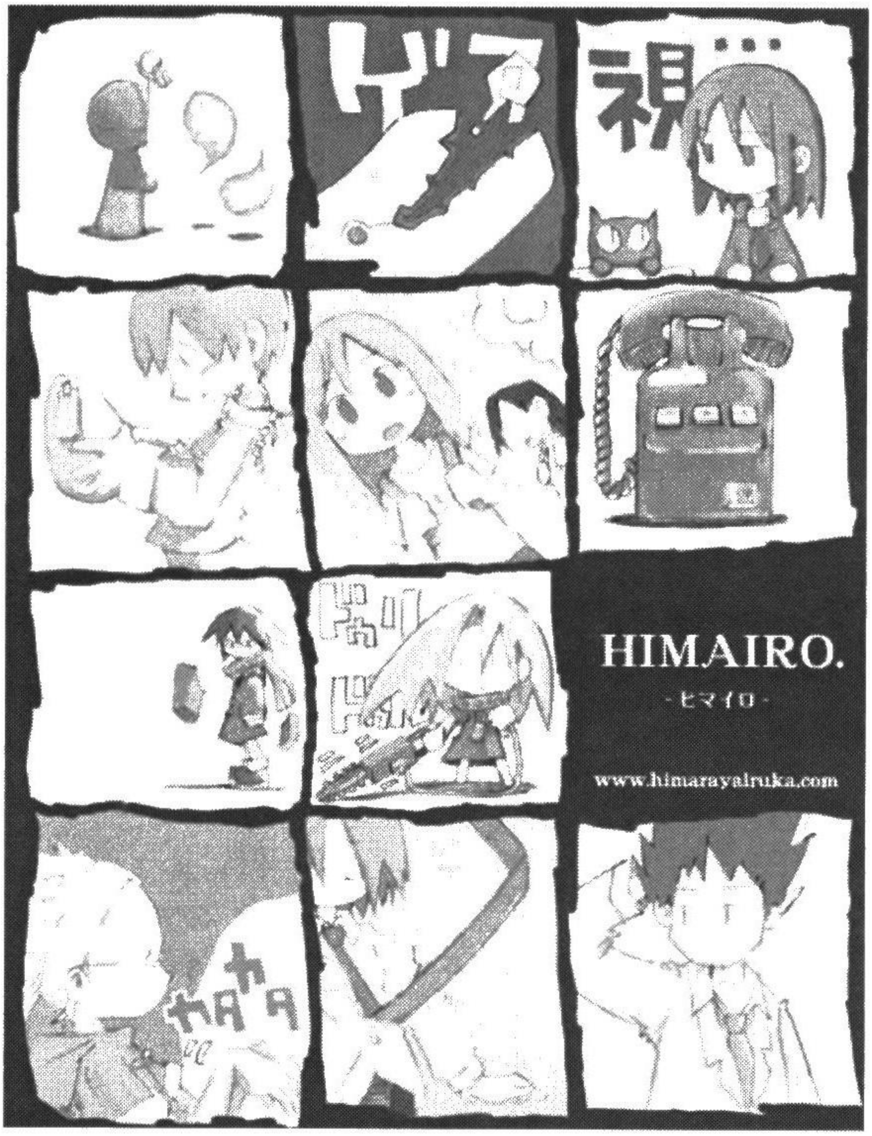

視…
HIMAIRO.
-ヒマイロ-
www.himarayairuka.com

Illustration "HIMAIRO" from Himarayairuka, published in the in the first half of 2003: The illustration "Tamago no Ko" is the one on the top right of the second row.

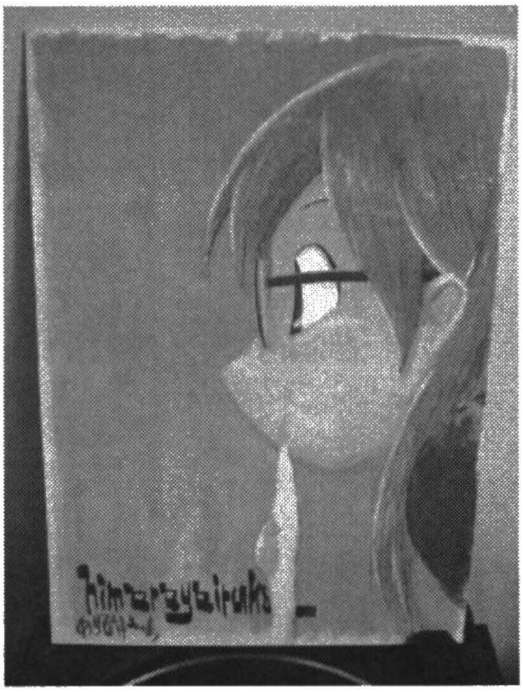
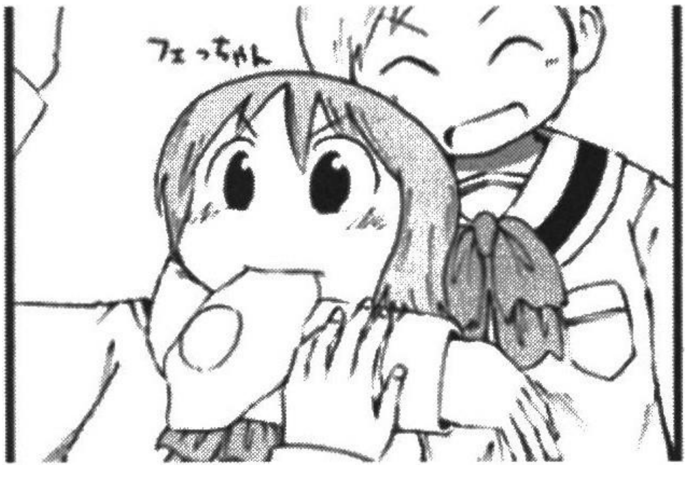


Illustration "Megane = Sunny Side" from kumomadori blog, published August 19, 2006: This drawing was used in the *Monthly Newtype* January 2011 issue appendix calendar and was also re-included in the commercial serialization of *Helvetica Standard*.



From *Nichijou* Volume 4, page 21: "Nichijou no Short 4."

Arawi, captivated by the design of the fried egg, featured it in his new manga. The web manga *Futsū*, published on Himarayairuka in December 2003, was a one-page manga that featured a talking fried egg.

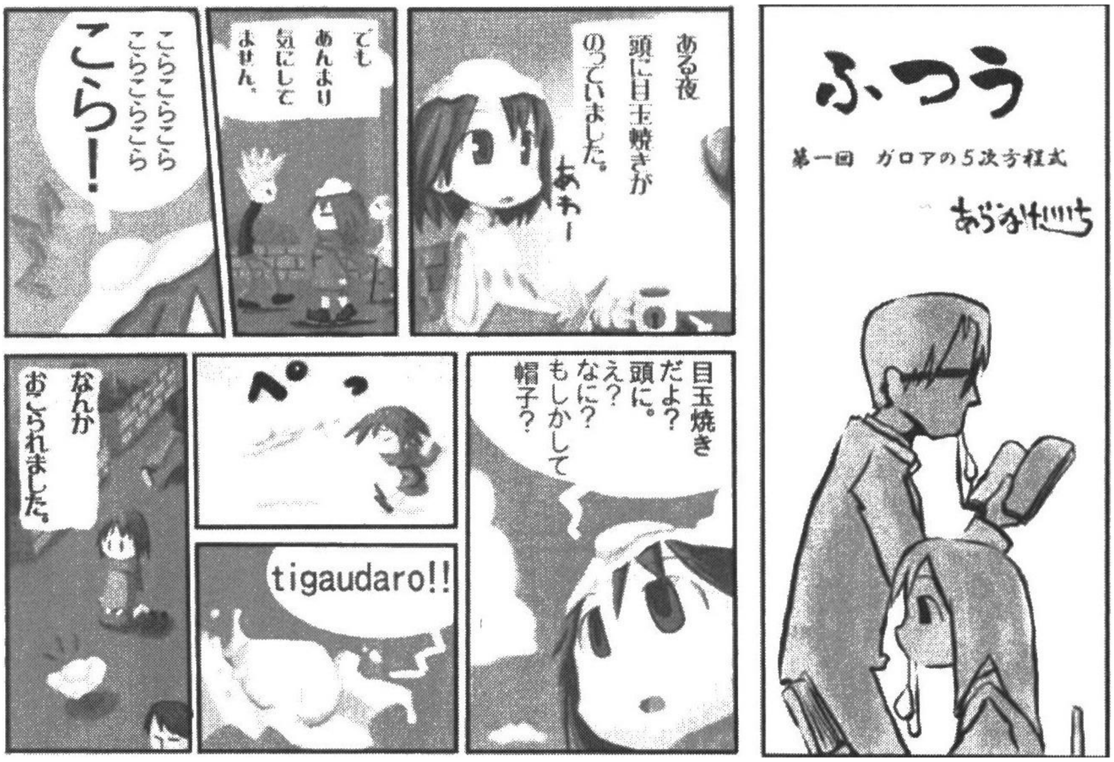
As has been noted several times, Arawi often uses the combination of a Girl and a strange mascot character as the main figures in his manga. In *Futsū*, the fried egg takes on the role of the strange entity, and the story progresses through its interaction with the Girl (who is nameless). This work follows the character dynamics of his past works but differentiates itself through the unexpected presence of a speaking fried egg.

Let's look closely at the story of *Futsū*. Chapter 1 begins with the incomprehensible situation of a single fried egg sitting on the Girl's head [5].

However, the easygoing Girl continues her normal life, unfazed by the fried egg. The fried egg complains to its unconcerned host, but the Girl pays it no mind. From the reader's perspective, a speaking fried egg should be a major shock. Yet, the Girl remains unmoved by the egg before her. This creation of a unique atmosphere, where events strange to the reader are met with nonchalance by the characters, is at play here.

This worldview, which portrays the discrepancy where the absurdity for the reader is the normalcy for the characters, is inherited from *Machi*. As with his previous work, Arawi succeeds in creating a calm-atmosphere gag that incorporates the absurd.

Chapter 2 features a young girl with pigtails in addition to the Girl and the fried egg. In contrast to the Chapter 1 Girl, the young girl is intensely curious about the fried egg and proceeds to take it away while the Girl is distracted.


ふつう
第一回　ガロアの5次方程式
あらゐけいいち
ある夜
頭に目玉焼きが
のっていました。
あわー
でも
あんまり
気にして
ません。
こらこらこら
こらこらこらこら
こら！
目玉焼き
だよ？
頭に。
え？
なに？
もしかして
帽子？
ぺっ
tigaudaro!!
なんか
おこられました。

Futsū Chapter 1, "Galois's Quintic Equation," published December 2, 2003: This manga also features a person holding a fried egg in their mouth.

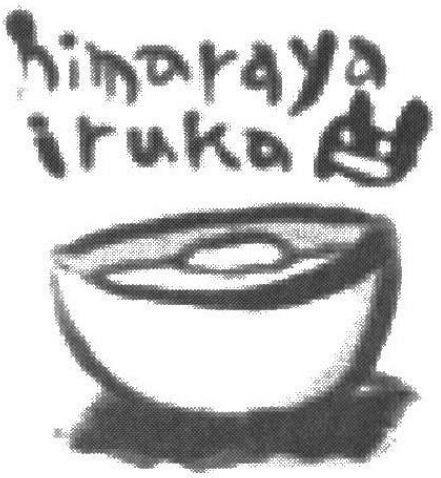
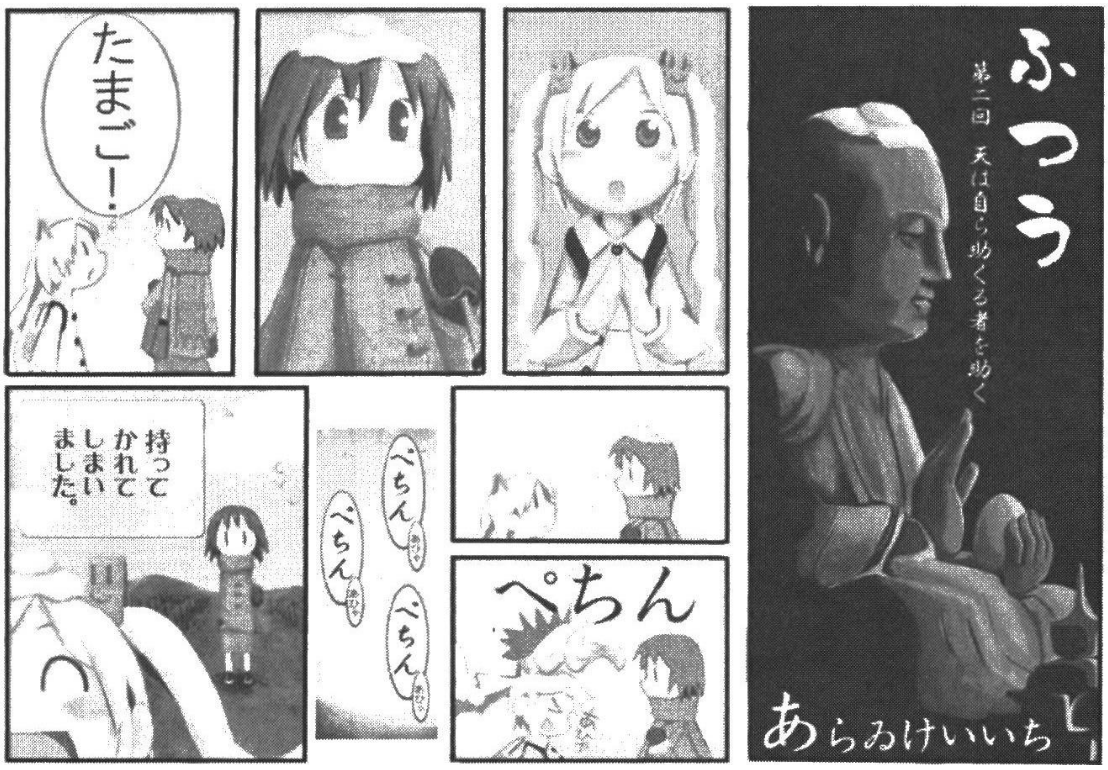
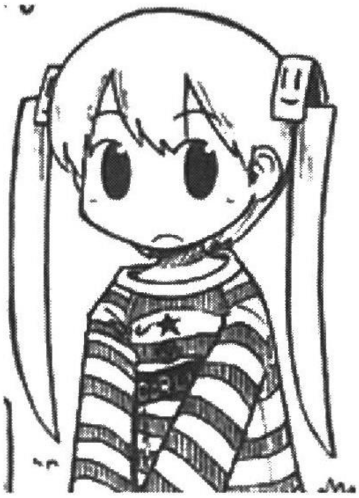

himaraya
iruka

Illustration published on Himarayairuka, December 10, 2003.


ふつう
第二回　天は自ら助くる者を助く
あらゐけいいち
たまごー！
ぺちん
ぺちん
ぺちん
ぺちん
ぺちん
持ってかれてしまいました。

Futsū Chapter 2, "Heaven Helps Those Who Help Themselves," published in early December 2003: The design of the hair clips worn by the young girl who took away the fried egg was later inherited by Saya-chan in *Futari Soccer*.



Saya-chan from *Futari Soccer*.

A clue to interpreting the story of Futsū lies in the title of Chapter 1: "Galois's Quintic Equation." Arawi stated that this title refers to the French mathematician Évariste Galois and is deeply related to the manga's worldview [6].

> ***I never thought I would draw a web manga, but after a few things, I ended up drawing it.***
> ***I gave it the subtitle "Galois's Quintic Equation" to link Galois's mindset upon realizing the true quintic equation with the worldview of the manga that is about to begin. Well, that's the gist of it.*** [From Himarayairuka, "Fried Egg Manga" (目玉焼き漫画), December 2, 2003]

In the early 19th century, mathematicians struggled to prove whether the solution to a quintic (fifth-degree) equation could be derived using only basic calculations (the four arithmetic operations and roots). Galois brilliantly demonstrated that no general formula exists to solve the quintic equation.

The answer to an equation of the fifth degree or higher cannot be found through ordinary calculation. Arawi took this mathematical discovery metaphorically and applied it to his own epistemology. Namely, he developed the idea that as the number of people increases, an absolute answer to the world cannot be found.

In the world of *Futsū*, there is no single correct perspective; the "right" way of seeing things is never settled. For example, from the reader's perspective, a world where a fried egg talks is abnormal. However, from the perspective of the Girl in Chapter 1, the fried egg is not strange at all in the same world. Furthermore, while the fried egg was a noisy nuisance constantly criticizing her from her head, for the young girl in Chapter 2, it was an object that aroused her curiosity.

Arawi states that *Futsū* overlaps "Galois's mindset upon realizing the true quintic equation" with the "worldview of the manga." This statement can be interpreted as an assertion that the solution to this work's worldview, like the quintic equation, does not exist.

If so, two meanings can be found in the work's title, *Futsū* (Ordinary): one is that the Girl's reaction to the fried egg remains ordinary, unchanged from her normal state. The other is that what is ordinary for the Girl may not be ordinary in the general sense.

In this respect—that there is no single correct perspective—the world of *Futsū*, while absurd, closely resembles the real world. This fact made the interpretation of the work all the more interesting.

From *Machi* to *Futsū*, Arawi created a unique worldview that successfully housed both the absurd and the "leisurely gag." The style developed in these two works would go on to evolve into the next work, *Helvetica Standard*, and subsequently into his commercial works starting with *Nichijou*.

---

[1]. "Tamago no Ko" was also set as Arawi's icon when he registered on the illustration posting site Tinami. See Himarayairuka, "Miscellaneous Writings" (雑文々), August 15, 2003.

[2]. The original design for "Yume Tamago," featuring a girl clinging to a giant egg, can be found in an illustration published in the free paper "kumomadori Art solid plan," which Arawi distributed at Comitia 83 in February 2008. The composition of this earlier drawing was of a girl spontaneously hugging an egg-shaped object. The illustration from "kumomadori Art solid plan" was later remade for the end-card illustration of the anime *Nichijou* Episode 24 (included as a sticker with the special edition of *Nichijou* DVD/Blu-ray Volume 7) and re-recorded in the *Helvetica Standard Italic* collected volume.

[3]. Comment included in the "Pictures" section of the *Helvetica Standard Bold*.

[4]. In "Anime Story #3," Arawi lists Hayao Miyazaki's *Castle in the Sky* as an anime he was obsessed with as a primary school student. He then quotes a scene where the main character, the girl Sheeta, eats a fried egg placed on toast. It is possible that Arawi's fascination with the fried egg motif stems from the lasting impression of this particular scene in Laputa.

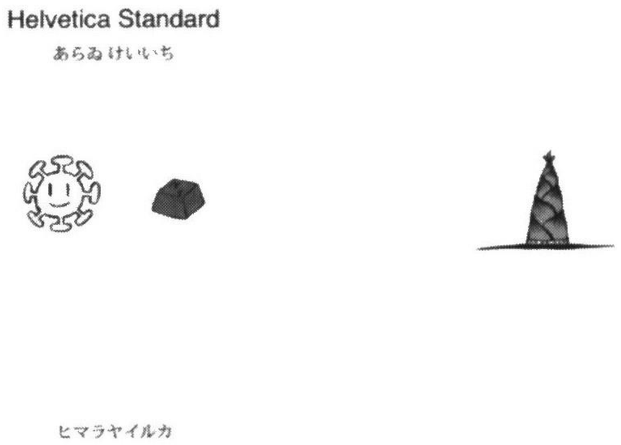
[5]. In the list of can badge designs for the announcement page of the "Arawi-darake no Keiichi Matsuri" in the September 2007 issue of *Shōnen Ace*, an illustration can be seen with a fried egg placed on the heads of *Nichijou*'s Yūko and Mio. This was likely drawn as a self-homage to *Futsū*.

[6]. The precocious Galois wrote papers that would contribute to the later development of the field of mathematics while still in his teens, but he passed away at the young age of 20. Consequently, not only his achievements as a mathematician but also his legendary life story are widely known. Arawi likely came across descriptions of Galois's life and became interested, leading him to learn about Galois's famous discovery regarding algebraic equations.

Kūkūjakujaku Creations #1: *Helvetica Standard*
Early Period (March–May 2004)

Helvetica Standard (Web manga)
- Chapter 1–72 and illustrations posted on Himarayairuka from March–December 2004.
- Chapter 73 posted on kumomadori blog on December 21, 2008.
- 77 pages total (73 main chapters, 1 cover illustration, 3 other illustrations).

Helvetica Standard (Collected volume)
- August 23, 2009, compilation volume reprinting all 73 chapters of *Helvetica Standard*, the cover illustration, and other illustrations from Himarayairuka, issued at Comitia 89 (Circle Space Re01a).
- Second printing of the compilation sold via mail order at Comic ZIN on February 12, 2010.
- Offset printing, A6 size, 100 pages total, Circle Name: Himarayairuka.


Helvetica Standard
あらゐけいいち
ヒマラヤイルカ

Collected Volume *Helvetica Standard* Cover and Back Cover

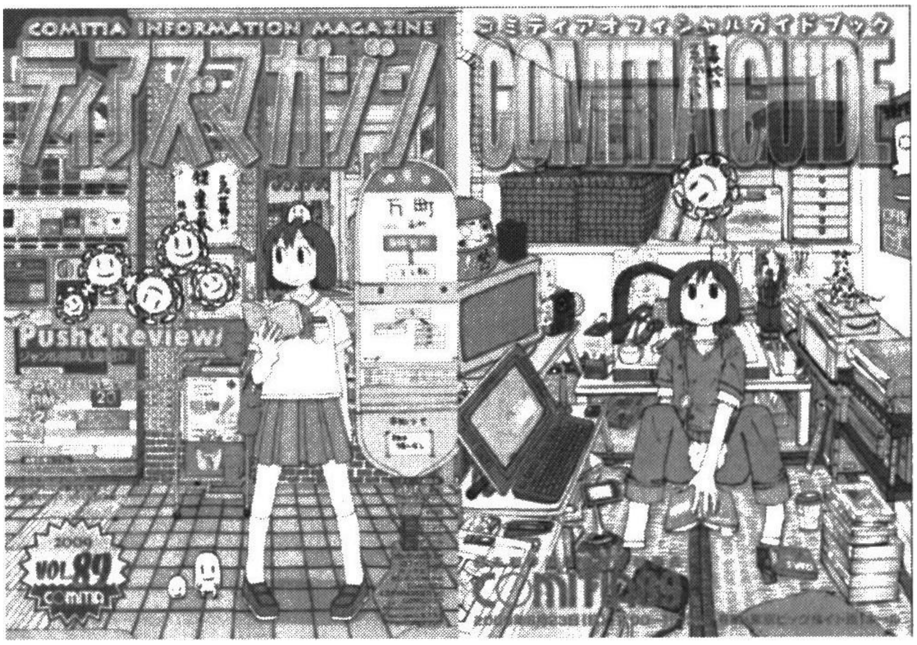
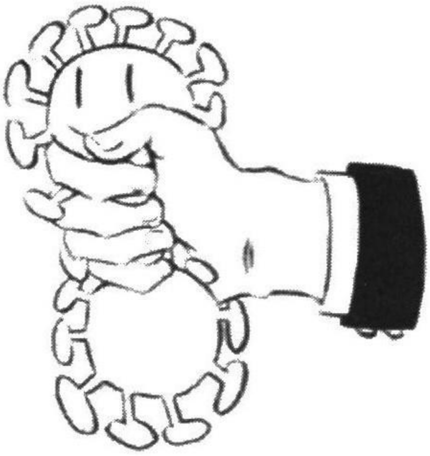

COMITIA INFORMATION MAGAZINE
ティアズマガジン
コミティアオフィシャルガイドブック
COMITIA GUIDE
Push&Review
VOL.89
COMITIA

Illustration for the Cover of *Tia's Magazine 89*: Arawi was responsible for the cover illustration of *Tia's Magazine* at Comitia 89, where the collected volume of *Helvetica Standard* was distributed.

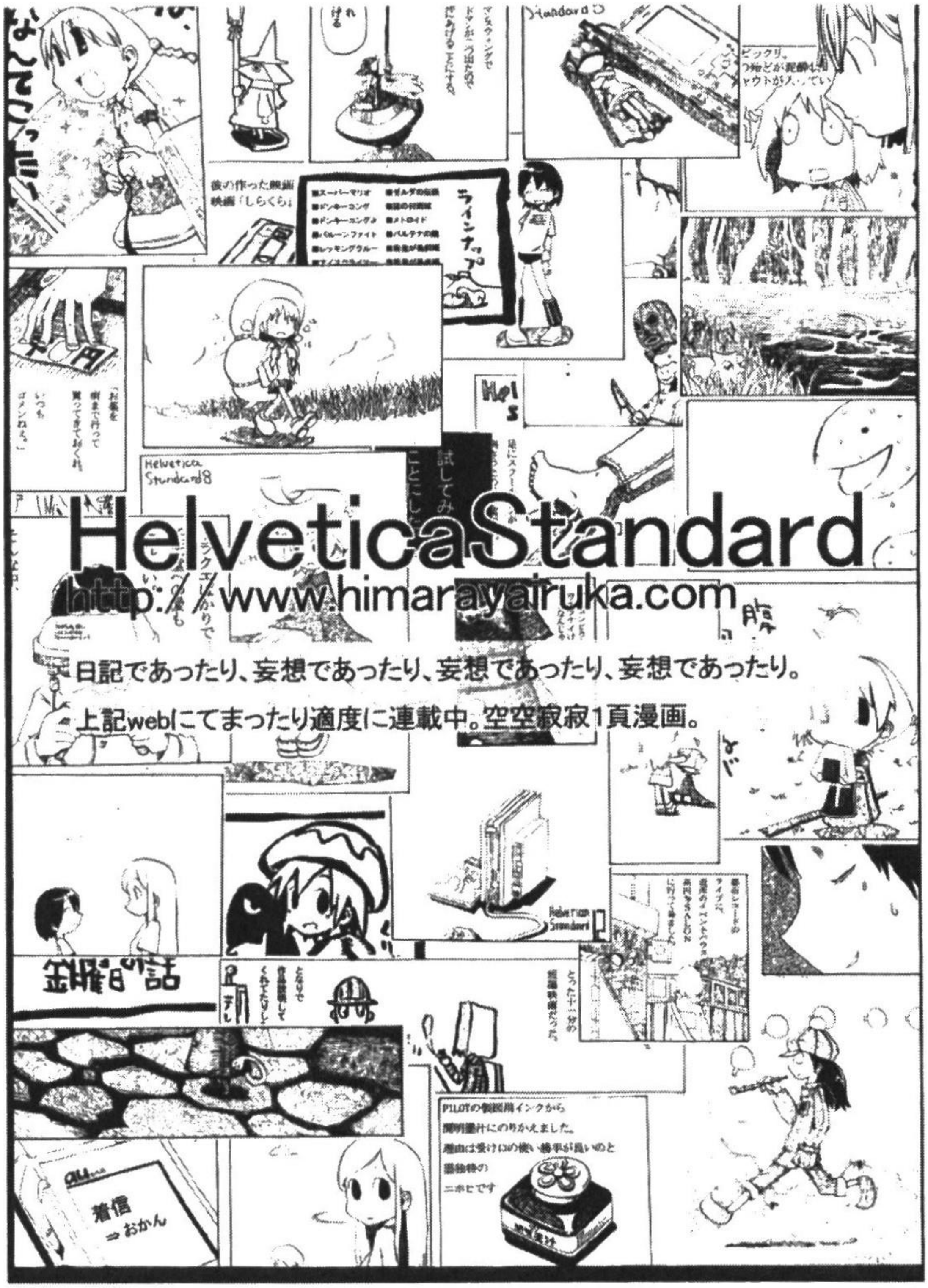
First Appearance Information for Chapters 1–17:

- Helvetica Standard (Cover Illustration) - Around April–May 2004
- Helvetica Standard 1 - March 2004
- Helvetica Standard 2 - March 2004
- Helvetica Standard 3 - March 2004 (Note: Remade in *Kazemachi*, published in the March 2006 issue of *Monthly Comic Flapper*.)
- Helvetica Standard 4: Kin'yōbi no Hanashi da yo. (金曜日の話だよ。, It's a Friday Story.) - March 26, 2004
- Helvetica Standard 5 - Around March–April 2004
- Helvetica Standard 6 - Around March–April 2004
- Helvetica Standard 7 - Around April 2004
- Helvetica Standard 8: Hakase no Kimyō na Ikajō (博士の奇妙な烏賊情, The Professor's Strange Squid Feelings) - Around April 2004
- Helvetica Standard 9 - Around April 2004
- Helvetica Standard 10 - Around April 2004
- Helvetica Standard 11: Nurarihyon no Kimochi mo Kangaero!! no Maki (ぬらりひょんの気持ちも考えろ!!の巻, Chapter of Consider the Feelings of the Nurarihyon!!) - April 2004
- Helvetica Standard 12 - Around April 2004

- Virtual Boy Helvetica Standard 13 - April 2004
- Helvetica Standard 14 - April 2004
- Helvetica Standard 15 - April 2004
- Helb(v)etica Standard 16 - April 2004
- Helvetica Standard 16.5" - April 2004
- Helvetica Standard 16.6 - April 2004
- Helvetica Standard 17 – May 2004



Circle Cut Published in *Tia's Magazine 89*: This was also re-included on the back of the cover for the commercial serialization of *Helvetica Standard*.


HelveticaStandard
http://www.himarayairuka.com
日記であったり、妄想であったり、妄想であったり、妄想であったり。
上記webにてまったり適度に連載中。空空寂寂1頁漫画。
僕の作った映画
映画「しらくら」
Helvetica Standard8
金曜日の話
着信
⇒おかん
PILOTの製図用インクから
開明墨汁にのりかえました。
理由は受け口の使い勝手が良いのと
墨独特の
ニホヒです

Helvetica Standard Promotional Flyer Distributed at Comitia 68: Panels from Chapter 1 up to the then-latest Chapter 15 are quoted.

Turning Himarayairuka's Memos into Manga

Futsū was Arawi's first color manga and his first work published on the web. He was enthusiastic about this new challenge, stating his desire to continue the series by experimenting with various expressions, such as "drawing with heavy lines, with watercolor, and with sumi ink" [1].

However, the serialization of *Futsū* was abruptly suspended after Chapter 2. This was likely related to his move to Wakaba Heights at the end of 2003. This apartment, to which he moved immediately after the publication of *Futsū*, lacked an internet connection, inevitably keeping him away from his computer [2].

Arawi had previously updated the text entries on Himarayairuka two to three times a week. He frequently visited the websites of acquaintances and enjoyed conversations on their bulletin boards.

However, after starting life in Wakaba Heights, he not only stopped updating Futsū but also significantly reduced his overall activity on the internet. Since he had just renewed his resolve to become a professional manga artist, inspired by the Tokiwa-sō artists, he likely lost interest in web activities during this period.

When he finally updated Himarayairuka in February 2004, he had scaled down the website, changing it to a simple design with only a drawing on the top page [3]. This, too, suggests his decision to concentrate on drawing manga.

Then, starting in March, he began writing a web manga in a different format from Futsū. He figured that by presenting the miscellaneous notes he used to write on Himarayairuka in manga format, he could practice his drawing and give progress updates simultaneously, killing two birds with one stone.

This process led to the birth of *Helvetica Standard*, which would later become his life's work. The series began as an irregular, one-page manga, with a total of 72 chapters posted on his website over nine months, from March to December.

> ***"Helvetica Standard"***
> ***Diary, or delusion, or delusion, or delusion.***
> ***Loosely and moderately serializing on the web above (Himarayairuka). Kūkūjakujaku one-page manga.***
> [From a flyer distributed at Comitia 68]

The concept of practicing manga and giving updates is clearly visible from Chapter 1 (hereafter referred to as "1," and similarly for other episodes). "1" takes trivial events from the author's daily life as its subject matter and can be seen as an essay manga. However, the distinctive element is the appearance of two self-portraits of Arawi, who converse with each other. While based on actual events, the chapter depicts a world different from reality.

In the opening of "1," Arawi first recounts the humorous anecdote of accidentally stepping on the tip of a school pen left on the floor. He then places the man's right foot, with the pen tip stuck in his heel, as his self-portrait.

The pierced foot is inherently comical and easily appreciated for its absurdity. However, the story in "1" is driven not by the right foot but by another self-portrait modeled after a girl.

The Girl immediately confesses her love for the "distinctive smell" of Kaimei sumi ink, which is used for drawing manga, and then muses about her love for the scents of incense and new shoes. She, too, is a projection of Arawi himself.

The Girl then confronts the man's right foot, the other version of himself, and scolds, "What on earth were you thinking when you made the HP (website)!?!!?" The Girl is angry that the right foot, despite plotting a major redesign of the website, got bored halfway through and let the updates lapse. The right foot sheepishly apologizes, saying, "S-sorry, I wasn't thinking about anything..."

By having two self-portraits embody their respective feelings, Arawi simultaneously expressed the frustration and self-criticism he felt over the failure to follow through on his idea to re-enrich the scaled-down Himarayairuka.

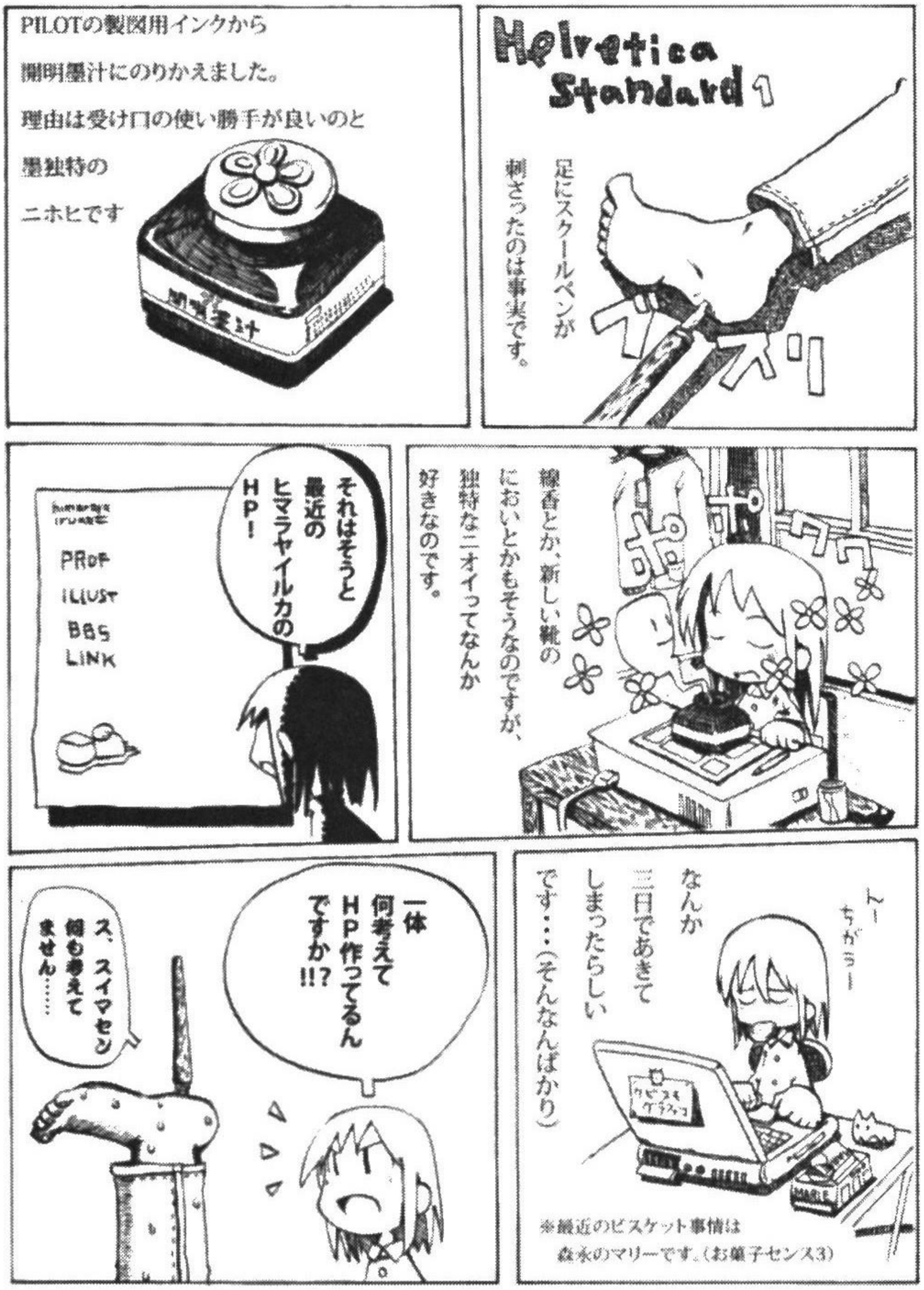
The content of "1," if written as prose, would be a brief apology. But by turning it into a manga, it became an experimental story where two self-portraits—two Arawis—converse. Although it contains diary-like elements, the style sets it apart from a simple essay manga.

Chapter "2" is the story of Arawi, with time to spare, replaying the game *Dragon Quest III* from his childhood. This appears to be a typical essay manga.

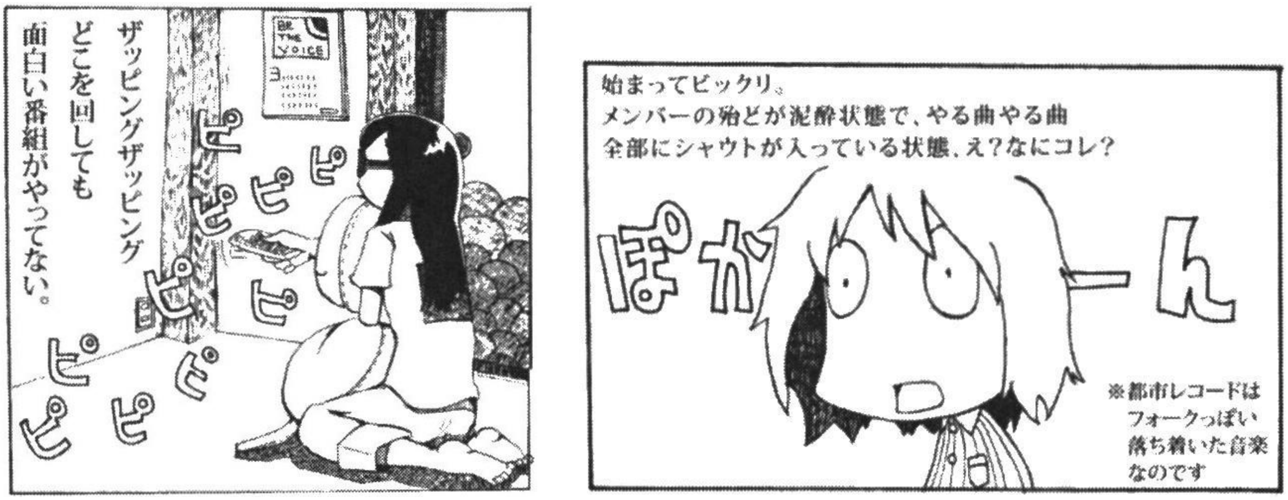
However, when viewed alongside subsequent chapters, a unique expressive device emerges. The self-portrait in "2" has the appearance of a man with long black hair and glasses. Yet, in chapters "4," "5," and "6," which are also essay manga published around the same time, Arawi's appearance changes drastically each time. This reveals a distinctive feature: the design of the self-portrait changes in every episode.

Furthermore, the self-portrait in "7" is no longer human-shaped. In this story, Arawi is depicted as a bizarre creature with a pointed mouth on its main body and a serpent-like second face at the tip of its tail. He used the form of the main body admonishing the lazy tail to express his reluctance to reply to emails and his desire to motivate himself to respond [5].

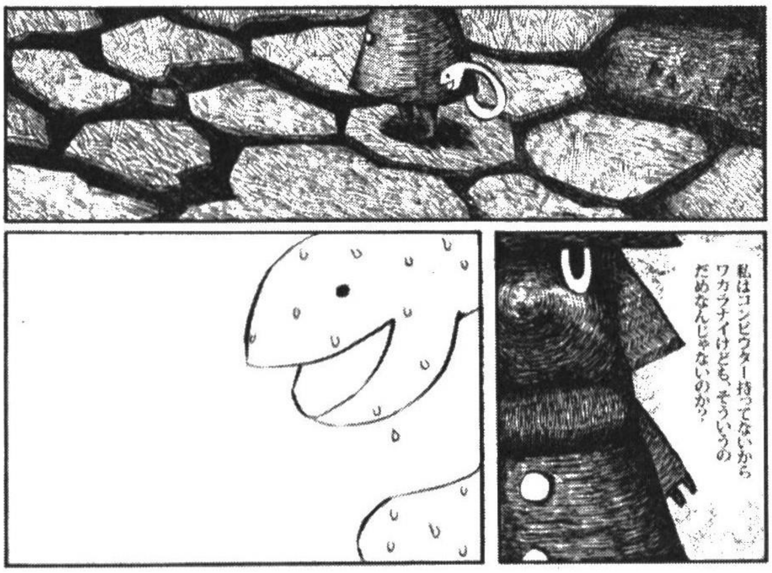
In this way, *Helvetica Standard* incorporated ingenuity that went beyond a simple essay manga. Arawi strove to surpass the reader's imagination through the unpredictable presentation of his self-portrait.


Helvetica Standard 1
足にスクールペンが
刺さったのは事実です。
ブスリ
PILOTの製図用インクから
開明墨汁にのりかえました。
理由は受け口の使い勝手が良いのと
墨独特の
ニホヒです
開明墨汁
線香とか、新しい靴の
においとかもそうなのですが、
独特なニオイってなんか
好きなのです。
ポ
ポワワ
それはそうと
最近の
ヒマラヤイルカの
HP!
PROF
ILLUST
BBS
LINK
んー
ちがうー
なんか
三日であきて
しまったらしい
です・・・（そんなんばかり）
※最近のビスケット事情は
森永のマリーです。（お菓子センス3）
MARIE
一体
何考えて
HP作ってるん
ですか!!?
ス、スイマセン
何も考えて
ません……

From *Helvetica Standard* "1": The man's right foot and the Girl, two self-portraits of Arawi, are conversing.


ザッピングザッピング
どこを回しても
面白い番組がやってない。
BE THE VOICE
ピピピピピピピピピピ
始まってビックリ。
メンバーの殆どが泥酔状態で、やる曲やる曲
全部にシャウトが入っている状態、え?なにコレ?
ぽか
ーん
※都市レコードは
フォークっぽい
落ち着いた音楽
なのです

Arawi's self-portrait in *Helvetica Standard* "2" (left) and "6" (right).


私はコンピウター持ってないからワカラナイけども、そういうのだめなんじゃないのか?

Arawi's self-portrait in *Helvetica Standard* "7": The technique of abruptly inserting a drawing style different from the norm became a frequently used gag in his later works, starting with *Nichijou*.

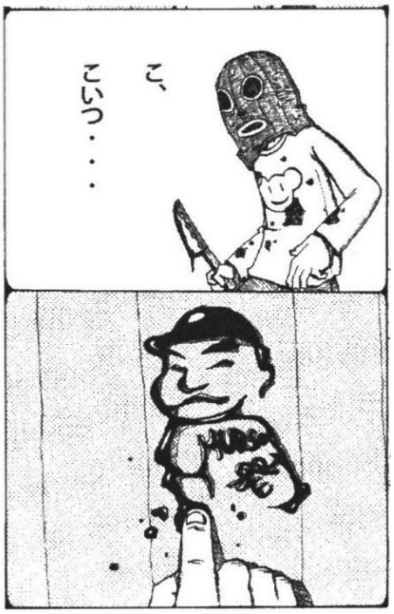
Between Real Experience and Fiction

Helvetica Standard included diary elements but featured self-portraits with an originality rarely seen in existing essay manga.

Arawi's experimental spirit didn't stop there. The series wasn't confined to just essay manga; it also featured gag manga with the same title that did not include progress reports. Since the miscellaneous notes originally posted on Himarayairuka included not only diary entries but also fragments of thought and poetry, it didn't feel unnatural to concurrently publish genres other than diary entries in the manga adaptation of the website.

Two main types of gag were newly incorporated into *Helvetica Standard*. One type involved episodes where characters were tossed about by outrageous events.

For example, "3" begins with a ski-masked robber stabbing a resident to death in the house they infiltrated. However, the robber is unnerved by the victim's dying message: the victim had used their own blood to draw a picture of Takahashi Meijin [6]. Drawing Takahashi Meijin, who was famous as a PR representative for the Family Computer in the 1980s, right before drawing one's last breath—the victim's inexplicable action combined with the pop art style of the drawing creates an absurd humor in "3." This type of gag would be heavily utilized in his later commercial series, starting with *Kazemachi*.

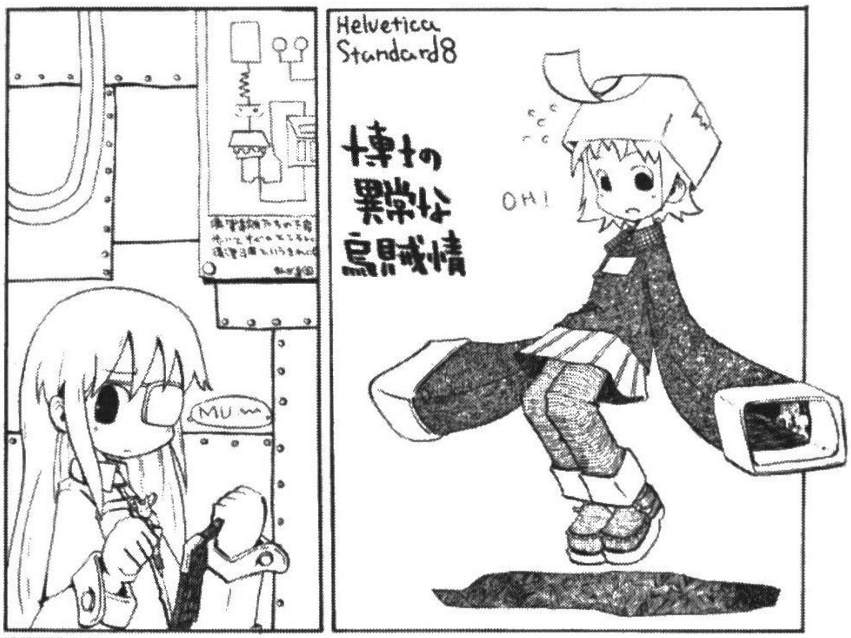


From *Helvetica Standard* "3": The illustration of Takahashi Meijin, wearing the Hudson Soft logo, is drawn as the victim's dying message.

The other type of gag featured characters living a laid-back life in a world that seems absurd to the reader. This style, cultivated in *Machi* and *Futsū*, was also used effectively in *Helvetica Standard*.

For instance, "8" consists entirely of a casual exchange between a young girl (Hakase) and her assistant (Nano). Hakase is collecting data by placing a device on her assistant's head, but the experiment isn't progressing as planned. Hakase puffs out her cheeks and starts fiddling with the tape hanging from the device. To cope with her frustration, she indulges in the pastime of folding the tape into the shape of a squid.

In the course of the experiment, Hakase is shown making her assistant's body float, suggesting she has made a monumental invention. Yet, "8" deliberately avoids emphasizing such surprising elements. It simply portrays the leisurely time flowing between the two under a worldview slightly detached from reality [7].



From *Helvetica Standard* "8": The Professor and Assistant in this episode are considered the original concepts for the *Nichijou* characters Hakase and Nano.

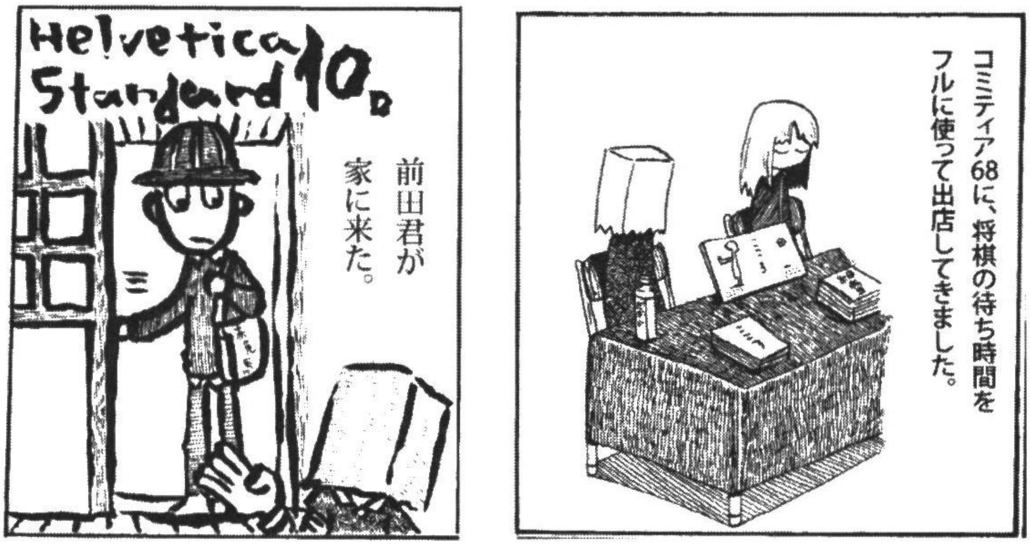
The mix of stories based on real-life experience and purely fictional gag manga prompted even further experimental expression. From this point on, *Helvetica Standard* began to play with the ambiguity between fiction and non-fiction.

"9" features a young man who is still hung up on an ex-girlfriend after a breakup. He wants to repair the relationship but can't bring himself to say anything. As he stalls, his mobile phone rings. He lights up with excitement, but the caller is his mother. The young man quietly realizes that his hope for reconciliation was premature.

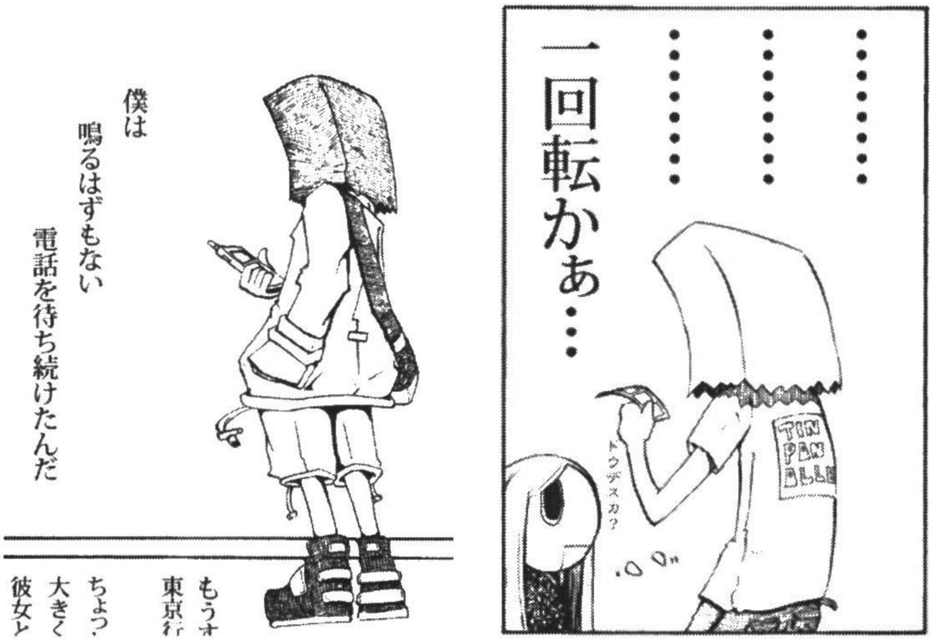
This tragicomic story is fiction and not an essay manga. However, in the next chapter, "10," a conversation between Arawi and a friend is drawn using the young man from "9" as the self-portrait. Thus, the young man in "9" appears as a special entity who can be interpreted as both a character within the work and a self-portrait.

This mixing of truth and falsehood continued. In "17," the same young man from "9" and "10" is shown presenting his new manga at Comitia. While there are elements that deviate from reality, this can be classified as an essay manga. However, in "22," the same young man is depicted reading a future four-panel manga sent from a karakuri doll-style facsimile machine, a highly fictional gag development.

By alternating between stories where the young man is drawn as a self-portrait and stories where he is not, the work established a unique style that was neither purely an essay nor purely an absurd gag.


コミティア68に、将棋の待ち時間をフルに使って出店してきました。
Helvetica Standard 10
前田君が家に来た。

From *Helvetica Standard* "10" (Left) and "17" (Right): The young man wearing a paper bag is drawn as a self-portrait.


一回転かぁ・・
TIN PAN ALLE
トウデスカ？
僕は
鳴るはずもない
電話を待ち続けたんだ

From *Helvetica Standard* "9" (Left) and "22" (Right), the paper bag young man is drawn as a fictional character, not a self-portrait.

To summarize the discussion so far: *Helvetica Standard* had three coexisting styles: essay, outrageous gag, and the "leisurely gag" depicting a relaxed life in an absurd world. Furthermore, it utilized the format of mixing real-life experience and fiction to blur the boundary between its characters and the self-portrait.

Consequently, the work is difficult to define. Arawi himself looked back on it as a "web 1-page manga that's hard to figure out."

> ***Helvetica Standard was a web 1-page manga that I did daily in 2004*** [8]***,***
> ***which was a diary, or a delusion,***
> ***well, you know, a web 1-page manga that's hard to figure out.***
> ***Reading it back now, I did the prototypes for Hakase and Nano,***
> ***and the original ideas for the manga Kazemachi,***
> ***so I guess I was learning a lot from it.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "Helvetica Standard," August 30, 2007]

Nevertheless, a commonality can be found in the work's three gag styles: they all share the similarity of "not being drawable by logic alone." The diary elements used as essay material largely consist of uncalculated happenstances. Outrageous gags and absurd worlds often require ideas to be squeezed out from outside the bounds of logic. In other words, the similarity lies in the fact that they were drawn by trusting the artist's own sense of what was interesting, rather than by deep thought and reason.

This is in contrast to his previous self-produced manga, which were "self-philosophy manga" that delved deeply into the creator's thoughts. The emphasis on feeling rather than thought gave the chapters of *Helvetica Standard* an overall cohesiveness.

Incidentally, the flyer for this work was branded with the tagline: "Kūkūjakujaku 1-page manga."Kūkūjakujaku is a Buddhist term representing a state of mind free from attachments and worldly desires. Arawi was aware of his writing attitude, which involved simply putting pen to paper without much conscious thought, and that is likely why he called the work "Kūkūjakujaku."

Drawing by Sensation, Not Logic

Helvetica Standard reached a new level, distinct from his previous works. Instead of trying to express philosophical thought, Arawi consciously tried not to think, which led to the creation of a purely sensational gag manga. Therefore, this work can be defined as the second genre of his manga, the Kūkūjakujaku Manga, following the "self-philosophy manga."

Let's delve a bit deeper into the Kūkūjakujaku element. Looking back at his past manga, Arawi recalled that he had "never created manga with logic." He states that he acquired the art of making better manga through instinctual feeling rather than reason.

> ***I have never created manga with logic. I feel that I have always drawn purely by sensation, setting aside reason. However, after many years of working, I realized that the more you draw purely by sensation, the higher your sensory experience level gets. When the experience level increases, a kind of crisis detection ability is born within me. When I'm about to go in the wrong direction, I know instinctively that things won't turn out well. Among the various choices available, it becomes easier to guide my creation in the direction closer to the correct answer.*** [From an interview for this book]

The moment Arawi realized he was drawing manga sensationally was likely during *Helvetica Standard*. It's plausible that the essay, outrageous gag, and "leisurely gag" elements of this work served to hone his sensitivity for drawing manga instinctively.

Indeed, Arawi once remarked that he was "learning a lot" from *Helvetica Standard*. He likely had this feeling because he was performing the task of raising his sensory experience level, which was necessary for drawing better manga.

In an interview about his methods for drawing *Nichijou*, he stated, "It's all sensation!" The concept of Kūkūjakujaku, more than the gags themselves, profoundly influenced his later commercial serialized manga.

> ***For that episode (Nichijou Volume 1, Chapter 7), I saw a deer on TV, drew a picture of a deer, and thought, 'That's kind of funny, maybe I'll draw a second panel.' I went to the punchline with that kind of momentum and finished the strip. That's probably the pattern for making almost all my material. First, a tiny spark, an illustration or a word, appears, and I follow that to continue. ...Seriously, it's all sensation! If I deeply analyze and categorize my own thoughts, I'm afraid it will become boring. Please let me rely on sensation (laughs).***

> [From *Studio Voice*, "Keiichi Arawi: Off-the-Charts, Otherworldly Creativity!," January 2008 issue]
>
> ***Even if I'm not in the mood, I draw the first two or three pages. Usually, once I draw the trigger for the story, the punchline becomes visible, but sometimes it doesn't at all. Still, I figure I have to draw the beginning at least. I draw the tempo and development by momentum, so I'm always nervous, like someone about to step onto a stage.***
> [From *Monthly Newtype*, "How to Ate Art Expedition: Keiichi Arawi Creates with the Tension of Stepping onto a Stage" (how to ate アート探検隊 あらゐけいいち 舞台に上がるような緊張感で作り上げる), January 2009 issue]

Furthermore, Arawi's later poem "Mobius o, Hirogete 5 Senchi" (The Möbius, Unfolded 5 Centimeters) is helpful for understanding the Kūkūjakujaku element. This poem figuratively discusses his dedication to drawing manga by following his senses.

> ***When you try to think things with your head,***
> ***is when you shouldn't think things with your head.***
> ***Immerse your hand in the water's surface as much as possible,***
> ***and somehow directly connect everything in this world (self-observation).***
> ***If you feel "Oh, wow!"***
> ***That's when you're being pulled in.***
> ***That's when your hand is on the doorknob.***
> ***Connect,***
> ***Then be objective.***
> ***Be heteroscopic (from another perspective).***
> ***Be optimistic.***
> ***The bodies,***
> ***cunningly do not erase the desire for multiplication. (Wish and Eternity)***
> ***Hahaha.***
> ***I think it's about trying to maintain not getting bored and not letting others get bored.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "Spread out the Moebius Strip to 5 Centimeters." (メビウスを、広げて 5 センチ。), May 2, 2007]

The opening line, "When you try to think things with your head, is when you shouldn't think things with your head," is imbued with his conviction that manga cannot be created with logic.

So, how does the concept for a manga emerge? According to him, it is by "Immerse your hand in the water's surface as much as possible, and somehow directly connect everything in this world (self-observation)." This is a cryptic expression, but its meaning becomes clear if we consider the metaphor of the "water's surface."

In Arawi's poetic world, the mind is like a puddle, and the images of the perceived outside world are reflected on its surface. By "Immerse your hand in the water's surface," he tries to scoop up the world reflected on his mind's surface—his self-observation—to find material for his manga.

In the world of the water's surface, the reflection of his mind, the subjects he is most interested in—the things he "somehow liking"—are visible. Thus, he argues that if he identifies his true feelings and finds what he genuinely likes, he can find things to create without using his head.

But why does Arawi strive to draw manga by sensation rather than logic? Because as a theory, the logic of creation has a set path to the answer. He reasoned that once mastered, it would eventually become stale.

On the other hand, if he gives himself over to sensation, he can continue creating "without getting bored and not letting others get bored." This is because the desire to collect the things he likes—the "desire for multiplication"—is something that never tires, no matter how much it is repeated.

He declared with this poem that he would entrust the writing of his manga to his instinct. An interesting manga can be created without thinking. In fact, by drawing things that he instinctively "somehow liking," he can continue the kind of creative work he finds fun. While the line "Be objective. Be heteroscopic" shows he doesn't forget the reader, the declaration is to rely on instinctual feeling.

The creative method established in *Helvetica Standard* had a profound and lasting influence. Arawi continued to write this work after 2004 [9], and more importantly, his next Comitia work, *Kokoro*, was a work that pushed the idea of drawing purely by sensation to its limit.

---

[1]. See Himarayairuka, "Fried Egg Manga," December 2, 2003.

[2]. See Himarayairuka, November 5, 2003.

[3]. See Himarayairuka, February 25, 2004. However, Arawi seems to have engaged in other internet activities, such as broadcasting the web radio show "Tengoku Hōsō" (天国放送, "Heaven Broadcast") a few weeks before simplifying the Himarayairuka page (February 8–9).

[4]. In Arawi's later manga *46 Spring #1* and *CITY* Chapter 6, the character Wako Izumi is shown relaxing by smelling Kaimei sumi ink and new shoes. Arawi's personal preference was likely projected into these depictions. In Chapter 2 of *Amemiya-san* (published in the October 2021 issue of *Gessan*), Amemiya-san is also seen in ecstasy while smelling new shoes.

[5]. Chapter "7" intentionally shifts the art style, with a momentary use of a pen-and-ink drawing style for the character. This style is likely influenced by the illustrations in Tove Jansson's *Moomin* series. A copy of Moomin is visible on the bookshelf in the background of Chapter "16," suggesting Arawi was reading it at the time.

Incidentally, the bookshelf in "16" also contains: Fujiko Fujio's *Manga Michi*; Genpei Akasegawa's *Rōjin-ryoku*, *Sakura Gahō*, *Leica Dōmei* (ライカ同盟, "Leica Alliance"), and *Jirojiro Nikki* (じろじろ日記, "Unflinching Diary"); and Hiroshi Mori's *The Perfect Insider*. Arawi's self-portrait is also shown reading Kazuichi Hanawa's *Doing Time*.

[6]. The essay "Meijin to no Omoide" (名人との思い出, "Memories with Meijin"), published in *Corocoro Aniki* Issue 5, recounts Arawi's past as a fan of Takahashi Meijin during his elementary school years and an anecdote about accidentally meeting Takahashi Meijin in 2005 (incorrectly stated as 2003 in the comic) and receiving an autograph.

[7]. A poster affixed to the wall in "8" features a quote from the narration of Fujiko Fujio's *Manga Michi*, a work Arawi loved, cited as an homage. This can be seen as the origin of the technique, used in Arawi's works from *Homare* onward, of inscribing information unrelated to the main plot into the background. "Just a short walk from Michio Manga's boarding house, there was a beautiful park called Kiyosumi Park! Michio Manga had always wished to take a walk in this park with a cute girl, and that wish unexpectedly came true!" The source is Fujiko Fujio no Digital Selection *Manga Michi* Volume 14, page 152.

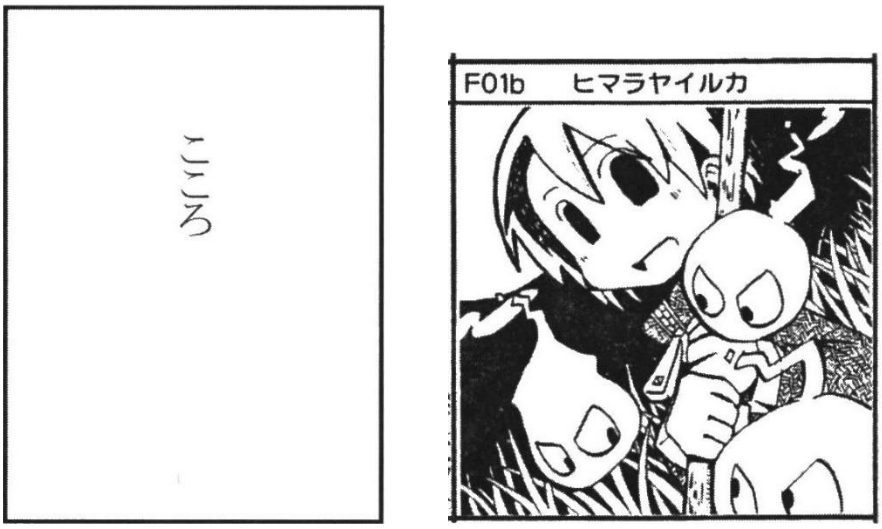
[8]. The original text states that the writing period for *Helvetica Standard* was 2005, but this is an error. The incorrect date is also found elsewhere, with the compilation volume *Helvetica Standard* and *Tia's Magazine 89* also listing 2005. This book has corrected all original references to 2004.

[9]. As mentioned in "Preflight to Commercial Manga #2" in this book, Arawi began the commercial serialization of *Helvetica Standard* in *Monthly Newtype* in 2008 and is still serializing it as of 2023. This commercial series is an extension of the work that began as a web manga, and it can be said that Arawi has spent the majority of his career as a manga artist with *Helvetica Standard*. In "Keiichi Arawi's Everyday Life 2: The Circumstances of Everyday Life" (あらゐけいいちの日常２ ニチジョウノジジョウ), published in the December 2022 issue of *Monthly Newtype*, he discusses that the reason he has continued drawing the work for so long is that he can challenge himself with things he finds interesting and new expressions. *"I think that's why my illustration column serialization in 'Newtype' (Helvetica Standard) has become the longest-running series of my career. I've been allowed to use that space for trial-and-error with various things. I think of it as my life's work, like Osamu Tezuka's Phoenix for him. It's not just a matter of accumulating things, but it has also been compiled into two volumes. I would be happy if I could continue to draw it forever."*

Kūkūjakujaku Creations #2: *Kokoro*
(May 2004)

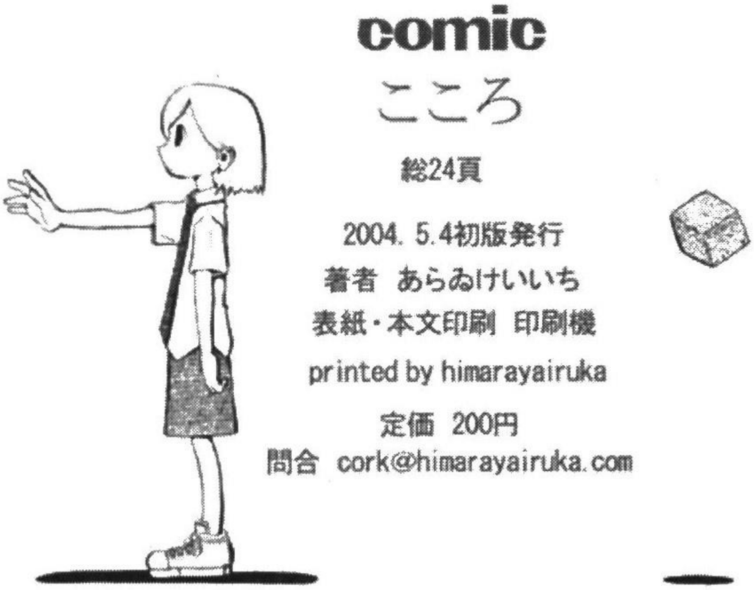
Kokoro (こころ, "Heart")

- May 4, 2004, at Comitia 68 (Circle Space F01b).
- Mail order conducted on Himarayairuka on June 5, 2004.
- Copybook, B5 size, 20 pages total, Circle Name: Himarayairuka, Byline: Arawi Keiichi.



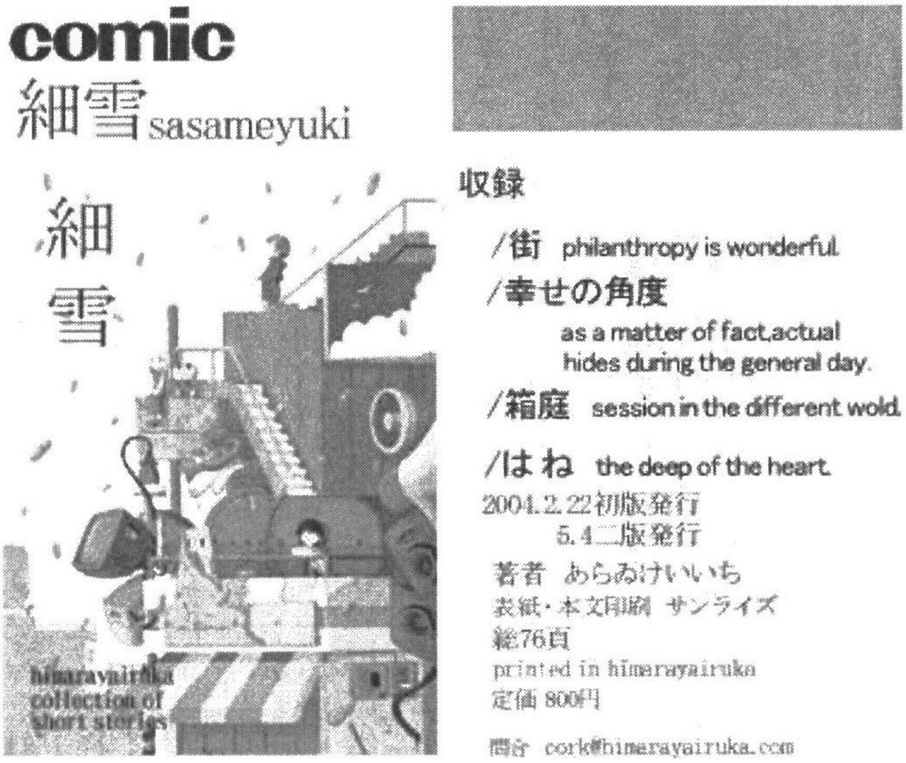
Left: *Kokoro* Cover

Right: Himarayairuka Circle Cut published in *Tia's Magazine 68*.



comic
こころ
総24頁
2004. 5.4初版発行
著者 あらゐけいいち
表紙・本文印刷 印刷機
printed by himarayairuka
定価 200円
問合 cork@himarayairuka.com

Promotional image created for the mail order of *Kokoro* in June 2004.



comic
細雪 sasameyuki

収録
/街 philanthropy is wonderful.
/幸せの角度 as a matter of fact,actual hides during the general day.
/箱庭 session in the different wold.
/はね the deep of the heart.
2004.2.22初版発行
5.4二版発行
著者 あらゐけいいち
表紙・本文印刷 サンライズ
総76頁
printed in himarayairuka
定価 800円
問合 cork@himarayairuka.com

Promotional image created for the mail order of *Sasameyuki* in June 2004.

Let's Turn on the Power of Self-Automatic Writing

On May 4, 2004, Arawi participated in Comitia 68 and released the second printing of the compilation *Sasameyuki* and his new manga, *Kokoro*.

The day's events are recounted, mixing fiction and reality, in the essay manga *Helvetica Standard* "17." While some parts are clearly fictional, the facts that all copies of his manga sold out and that several fellow artists came to his circle space to greet him were true. The artist, who had been participating in Comitia for a year and a half, was no longer a newcomer but was becoming a recognizable figure at the venue [1].

> ***Thank you and well done to everyone who came to our place at Comitia 68.***
> ***I was demon-level happy to see the circles that came to say hello. Thank you!***
> ***Next time, I intend to take my books to your spaces. [...]***
> ***Also, I'd be delighted to hear any thoughts you have. Well, there might not be anything more difficult than giving feedback on my books.***
> [From Himarayairuka, May 13, 2004]

The interesting part of the quote above is Arawi's statement that giving feedback on his manga might be difficult. Although he had released works that were not straightforward to interpret before, this was the first time he described his own work as difficult specifically referring to *Kokoro*.

Why did Arawi consider *Kokoro* to be particularly difficult? One reason is that the work was created entirely without words. The four works compiled in Sasameyuki were each challenging, but they could be analyzed using the characters' dialogue and narration as clues. In contrast, *Kokoro* depicts events outside the reader's common sense only through pictures and simple panel layouts. Consequently, the work was even harder to grasp in terms of its theme.

Another factor contributing to the difficulty of *Kokoro* is its characteristic writing method. Arawi intentionally drew the work with "automatism" in mind.

> ***Let's gather the small pieces scattered in the right and left brain,***
> ***and turn on the power of automatism, which may or may not have been cultivated. Let's do that.***
> ***Making the honey and licking the honey yourself.***

> ***The motivation for the extreme is: "It seems fun, so let's just do it." You have to move when you can.***
>
> [From kumomadori blog, "Density of a Week" (一週間の密度), December 26, 2007]

Automatism refers to attempts to express unconscious imagery by drawing scenes seen in a semi-awakened state or by rapidly composing impromptu texts faster than thought can follow.

This method was established by the poet André Breton, known as the father of Surrealism. Breton sought to create works outside the bounds of convention, distinct from existing literature and art. To do so, he explored a creative method of deliberately not thinking at all and devised automatic writing.

As seen in the section on *Helvetica Standard*, Arawi was focused on drawing manga by sensation during this period. While this work wasn't strictly automatic writing, there's a commonality in the intentional effort to create a work without thinking.

As a further refinement of Helvetica Standard, Arawi likely came up with the idea of writing manga in the manner of automatic writing. He adopted the method of skipping the rough draft—the blueprint for the manga—and drawing "the images in his head" directly onto the manuscript paper for *Kokoro* [2].

> ***When I draw manga for Comitia, I never make a name.***
> ***I just rely on the image in my head and go straight to the manuscript.***
> ***I hadn't done that in a while, and it was really fun.***
> ***It's like, imagine slamming your thoughts onto a canvas.***
> ***It feels exhilarating.***
> [From the afterword of *Hirake!*]

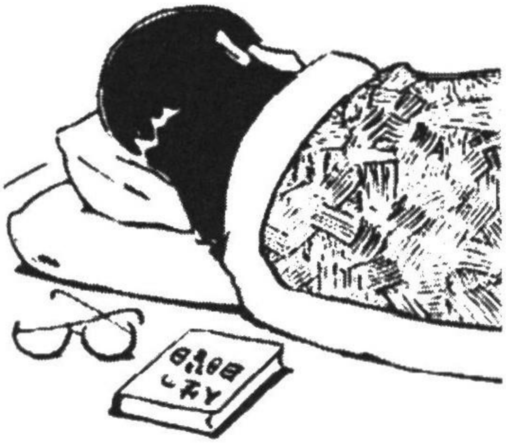
Arawi later recalled that for his self-produced manga for Comitia, he skipped the name stage and went straight to the manuscript paper. The work he is referring to here is likely *Kokoro*. Driven by a strong desire to draw manga purely by sensation, he deliberately avoided preparation and spun out the work with a Kūkūjakujaku attitude.

This creative method inevitably pushes the work closer to Surrealism. The fact that the work was described as difficult is logical given its process of creation. Kokoro was created with the aim of being an absurd work that not only the reader but also the author himself could not rationally explain.

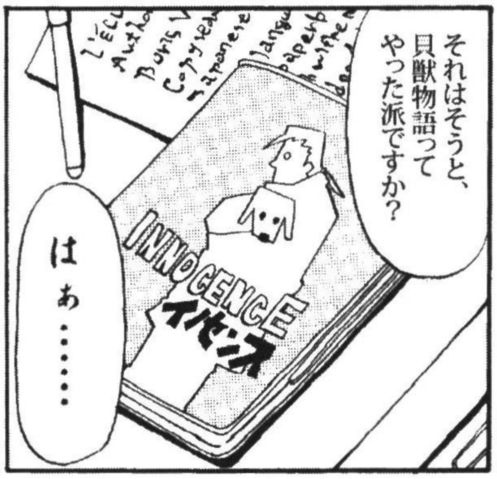
Arawi's plan succeeded brilliantly, and the work was finished as an enigmatic piece. This also meant that the work was completed as a unique, one-of-a-kind Kūkūjakujaku Manga that no one else could imitate. The direct reflection of his sensation is the greatest feature of Kokoro's unique world, a world that could never be ghostwritten.

It is believed that Arawi's venture into automatic writing was heavily influenced by the foreign literary works he began reading around 2004. After starting to read novels by Japanese literary figures in 2003, he shifted his interest abroad the following year and avidly read foreign novels [3].

Notably, *Helvetica Standard* "23" and "54" feature Boris Vian's *L'Écume des jours* (Froth on the Daydream), and "52" features Raymond Queneau's *Le Dimanche de la vie* (The Sunday of Life). Although neither author used automatic writing, both were purveyors of French avant-garde novels, which likely influenced the absurd world of *Kokoro*.



From *Helvetica Standard* "52": Raymond Queneau's novel *Le Dimanche de la vie* is placed beside the pillow.



From *Helvetica Standard* "54": The text "L'Écu(me des jours) Author Boris V(ian)" is written behind the package of the animated film *Innocence*, directed by Mamoru Oshii.

Wooden Box = The Spirit of Others, Wood Grain = Passing Time

Kokoro adopted a form of automatic writing, improvisationally projecting images from the brain onto the manuscript paper. Consequently, the work leaned into a Surrealist worldview. Furthermore, by omitting verbal explanation, it was established as a Kūkūjakujaku Manga that could only be created by Arawi and could not even be explained by the author himself.

Arawi himself seems to have drawn this work aiming for a manga that could elicit diverse interpretations from readers.

> ***It would be nice if the manga wasn't one with a single answer, but one where everyone has their own answer.***
> ***That's what I was thinking when I drew it, so [...]***
> ***Long live the meaningless! Lol.***
> ***I think the answer to meaninglessness is only the one you hold, regardless of what other people think.***
> ***That's what, how should I say it, is interesting.***
> ***Yeah. Doesn't that sound good? Meaningless, lol.***
> [From a comment posted to the Himarayairuka BBS on November 22, 2003]

Nonetheless, the creator's intention can be discerned from *Kokoro*, just as in his other self-produced manga. While grasping the meaning of this work is certainly not easy, by comparing its depictions with those in his past works, a single, logical interpretation can be derived.

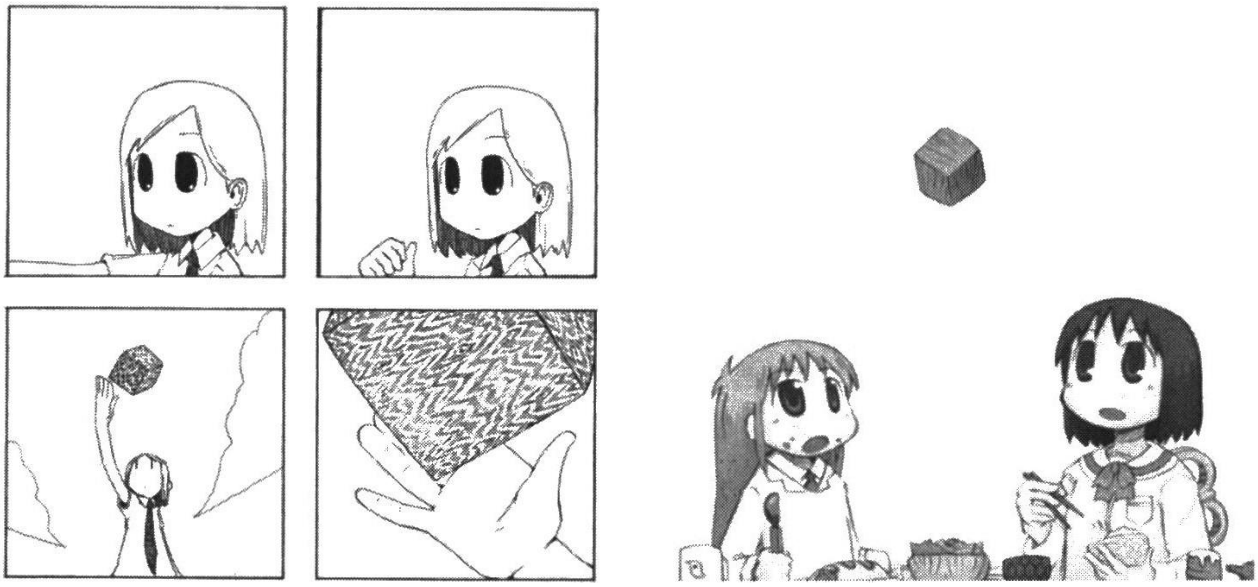
Therefore, we shall proceed by analyzing each motif appearing in the work to clarify Arawi's intention embedded in it.

The story of *Kokoro* begins with a nameless Girl catching a wooden box falling from the sky. The Girl holds the wooden box dearly and refuses to let go of it until the very end.

The mention of a wooden box brings to mind his previous work, *Hane*. That work began with a girl, who was the imagined image of another person, being surrounded by wooden boards.

It follows that the wooden box in *Kokoro* can be understood in relation to *Hane*. Specifically, the wooden box can be read as a metaphor for the mental world of another person, and the Girl who catches the wooden box can be read as an allegory for a person who accepts the feelings of others.

The girl in *Hane* muses at the end of the story, "I will accept your voice, that voice of yours," showing an attitude of listening to the words of others. The Girl in *Kokoro* symbolically inherits this idea. She appears in the work as the embodiment of a person who accepts the words and feelings of others, taking hold of the wooden box.

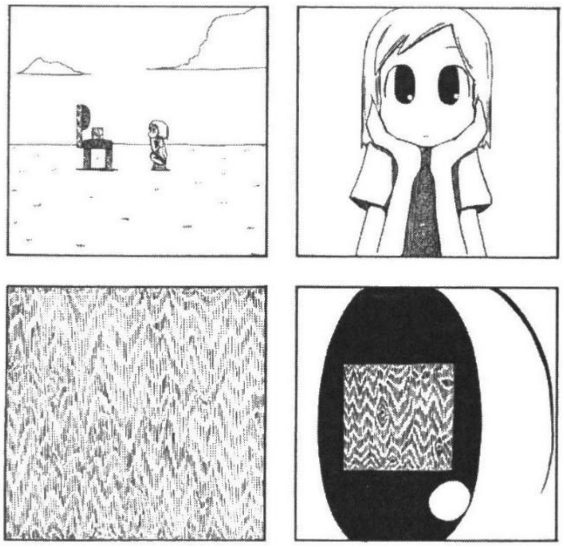


Left: From *Kokoro*, page 2.
Right: From cover illustration of *Nichijou* Volume 2: The depiction of the wooden box flying in *Kokoro* is self-homaged in the depiction of Mio's hair accessory, the Wood Cube, flying in *Nichijou.*

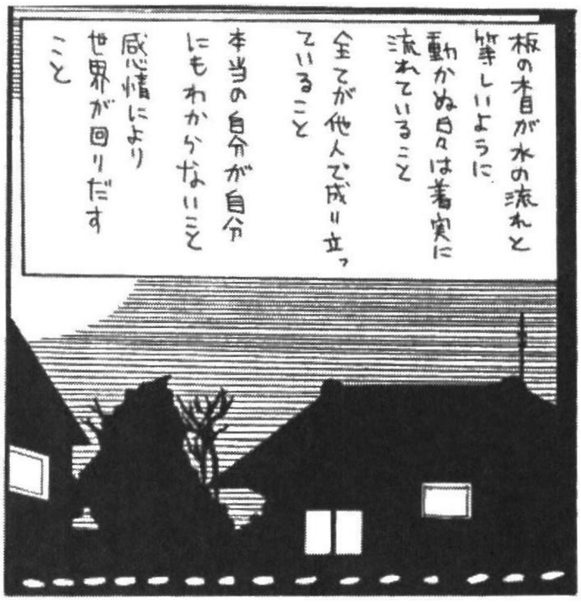
In the next scene, the Girl, still holding the wooden box, runs away. She arrives at a strange place where only a single chair is placed and puts the wooden box on the seat. The Girl kneels down and stares blankly at the wooden box. The wood grain pattern carved into the box is reflected in her eyes.

Following the wooden box, the wood grain pattern can also be read as a symbolic motif [4]. A passage from the ending of *Hane* states, "Just as the wood grain of the board is the same as the flow of water, the unmoving days are surely flowing by." This suggests that the wood grain pattern is a metaphor for the flow of water, and by extension, the "time passing like the flow of water."

The Girl is about to experience the loneliness of separation due to the passage of time, and the wood grain pattern can be interpreted as foreshadowing and symbolizing that destiny.



From *Kokoro*, page 7: The Girl stares blankly at the wooden box.

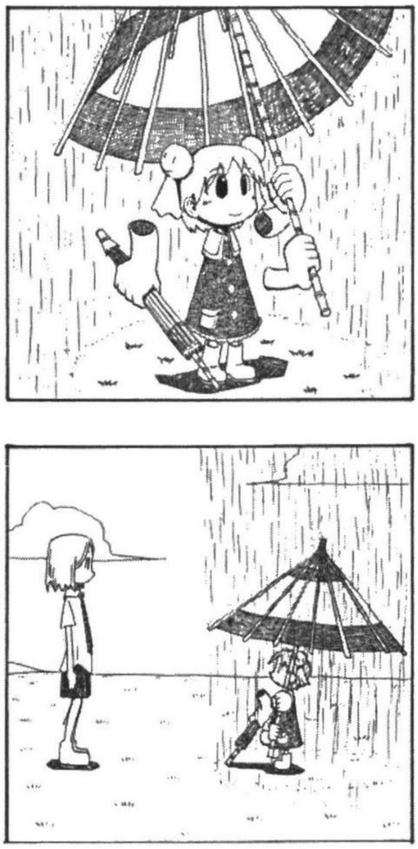

板の木目が水の流れと
等しいように
動かぬ日々は着実に
流れていること
全てが他人で成り立っ
ていること
本当の自分が自分
にもわからないこと
感情により
世界が回りだす
こと

From *Hane*, page 14: The passage written: "Just as the wood grain of the board is the same as the flow of water, the unmoving days are surely flowing by. That everything is made up of others. That the true self is unknown even to oneself. That the world starts spinning due to emotion."

In the next scene, the Girl encounters a young girl who appears out of nowhere. The young girl, standing under a sudden rain shower, had a distinctive appearance with teru teru bōzu (a traditional paper doll talisman) dangling from her temples.

The teru teru bōzu young girl hands the Girl a Japanese umbrella and offers a friendly smile. The Girl feels a desire to become friends with this young girl.

However, the time spent with this young girl was brief. She abruptly vanished the moment the Girl looked away. This mysterious neighbor, who appeared with the rain, was nowhere to be found the moment the rain stopped.



From *Kokoro*, page 8: The young girl with teru teru bōzu hair ornaments appears before the Girl.

In *Hakoniwa*, a young girl identifying herself as a Property Agent appeared as a symbol of the other. This teru teru bōzu young girl is also positioned as the Other, fundamentally distinct from the Girl. However, while the girl in *Hakoniwa* rejected the Property Agent, the Girl in *Kokoro* is trying to open her heart to the young girl.

This difference likely arose precisely because the Girl was holding the wooden box at the beginning of the work. The wooden box = the mind of another person that the Girl picked up originally belonged to the teru teru bōzu young girl = the Other. Therefore, the Girl, who was holding the wooden box dearly, felt affection for the young girl and desired to become friends with her.

However, that wish was not granted, and the young girl suddenly evaporated. The reason is never revealed until the end of the story, and the Girl can only feel lost. The only certain fact is that they were separated without the Girl being able to offer a thank you or a goodbye for the umbrella she received.

This unexpected separation from the Other clearly represented time passing like the flow of water. The young girl's disappearance was likely the direct, narrative depiction of what the wood grain pattern had symbolized metaphorically.

As time flows, people meet and separate from various individuals and things, accumulating loneliness in their hearts. By losing sight of the teru teru bōzu young girl, the Girl in this work keenly felt the inevitable passage of time that everyone experiences.

A Snot Bubble = The Symbol of Death, Rain = Immersion in Worry

Just before encountering the teru teru bōzu young girl, the Girl is suddenly struck by sleepiness and trips over a stone. At that moment, the snot bubble she had inflated played a crucial role. Just as she was about to fall and hit her face on the ground, the snot bubble acted as a cushion, absorbing the impact.

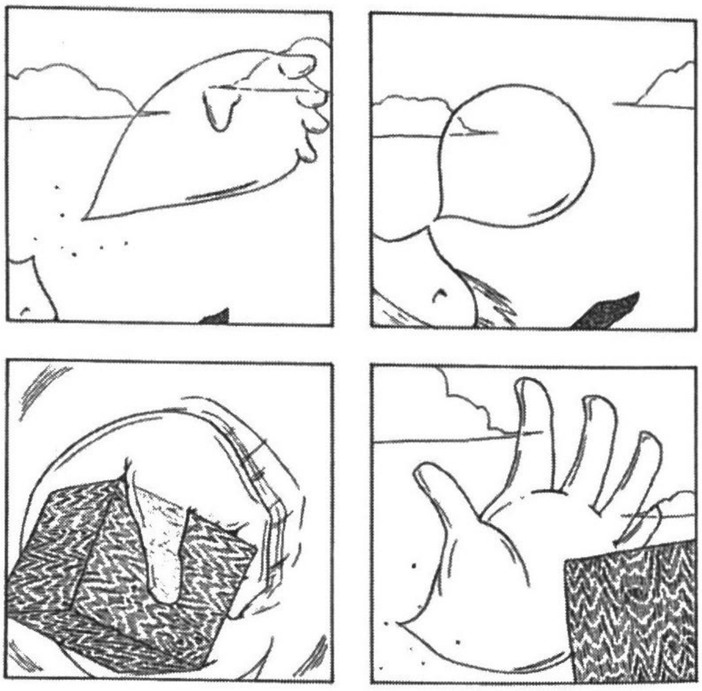
The snot bubble also helped her after she dropped the wooden box when she stumbled. It changed its shape to that of a hand and caught the wooden box for her.

This series of depictions related to the snot bubble can be understood in connection with his past works, *Inpū* and *Hane*. In *Inpū*, a speech bubble, a symbol used in manga, materialized, and in Hane, a sweatdrop, a symbol of manga, materialized. The snot bubble in this work is also a manga symbol representing a character's sleep, and it gains a physical presence by materializing within the story.

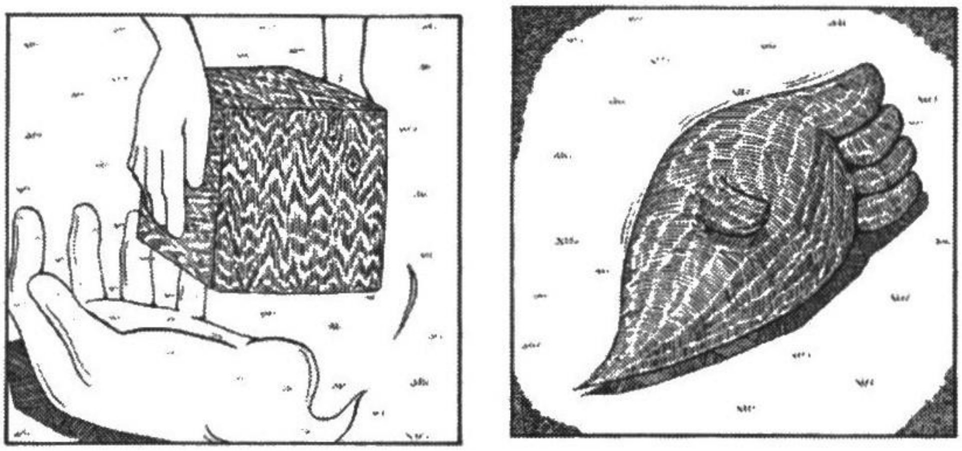
However, the Girl's snot bubble is given an even more significant meaning than those in previous works. Despite being a manga symbol, the snot bubble meets its death within the story. When the Girl suddenly wakes up, she sees the snot bubble that caught the wooden box separated from her body and lying on the ground. But her eyes only see the wooden box. The snot bubble is left on the ground, loses its vitality, and eventually becomes hard and motionless like a stone.

It goes without saying that death is the most prominent event that makes us feel the passage of time [5]. This work not only presented the absurdity of a materialized manga symbol but also killed that symbol, thereby reinforcing the theme of the loneliness of separation.

The separation from the teru teru bōzu young girl and the death of the snot bubble bring the Girl into a state of contemplation. The next moment, she is stunned. She realizes that time can never be turned back, and the opportunity to meet the vanished young girl or the dead snot bubble will never come again. The Girl viscerally feels the passage of time, flowing like water, which the wood grain had symbolically prophesied.



From *Kokoro*, page 5: The materialized snot bubble grasps the wooden box.



From *Kokoro*, page 6: The snot bubble loses its vitality, and its frothy texture changes.

Realizing the passage of time and feeling her heart ache with the loneliness of separation, what did the Girl do? For some inexplicable reason, she ties the Japanese umbrella she received from the young girl to the chair. Then, even more strangely, rain starts to fall from the inside of the open umbrella. The Girl silently watches the raindrops springing from the umbrella.

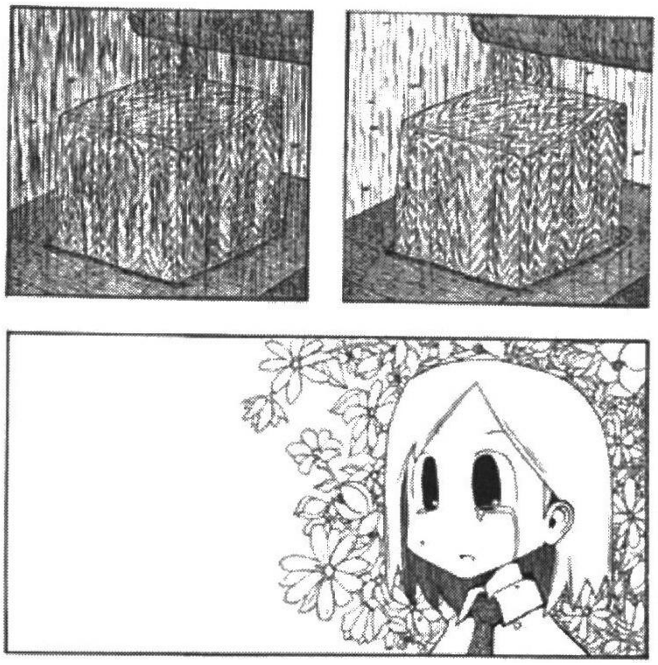
Arawi's poem "Direction of Tomorrow" (明日の方向性) serves as a clue to interpreting this scene and the motif of rain. In this poem, he describes raindrops in the following way:

> ***Reference 1: Let's assume each drop is a worry. It soaks into the ground instantly, but each drop, again, falls as another drop.***
> ***Reference 2: Not tears, but ≈ tears.***
> ***Reference 3: I unconsciously try to collect them in a plastic bottle, but it's a bad thing to do. This, in turn, accelerates the process and makes more drops fall.***
> ***Reference 4: But you can faintly see through the gaps. This is it.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "Direction of Tomorrow," August 26, 2007]

Regardless of the Girl's will, time continues to tick forward and cannot be undone. No matter how much she wishes to see them, she will never be able to meet the young girl or the snot bubble again. All the Girl can do is immerse herself in the faint memories of her interactions with them.

So, the Girl tried to come to terms with the fact that they are now gone by "immersing" the wooden box = the spirit of the other, in the rain, where "each drop is a worry." The series of images of the rain soaking the wooden box can be interpreted as a scene where she transforms her troubled thoughts into rain and nostalgically remembers the one who is no longer there in her heart.

And so, the Girl, who continued to think about the young girl and the snot bubble, eventually sheds large tears. By recalling her past memories and touching upon the time that can never be recovered, she re-experiences the intense sadness of separation.



From *Kokoro*, page 13.

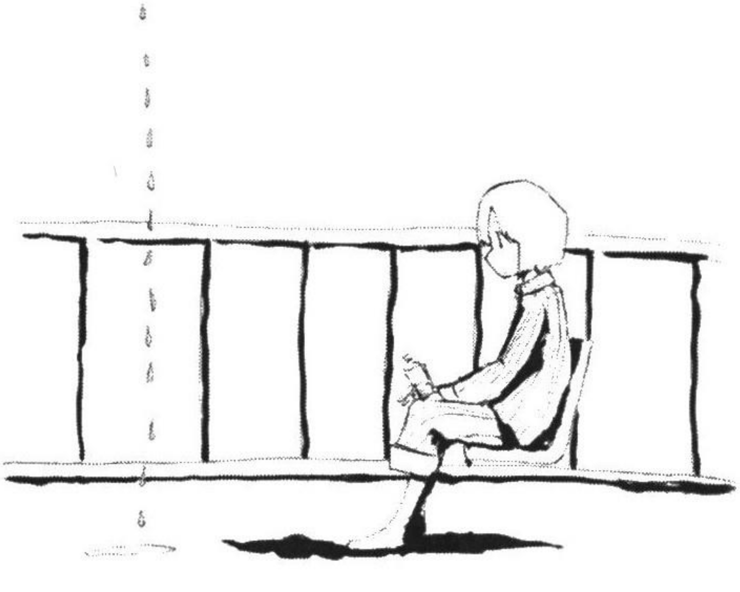


Illustration accompanying "Direction of Tomorrow," kumomadori blog, August 26, 2007: The illustration's first appearance was in December 2004.

The Self That Sees the "Self Seen by Others"

Let's re-examine the motifs that appeared in *Kokoro* and their implied meanings.

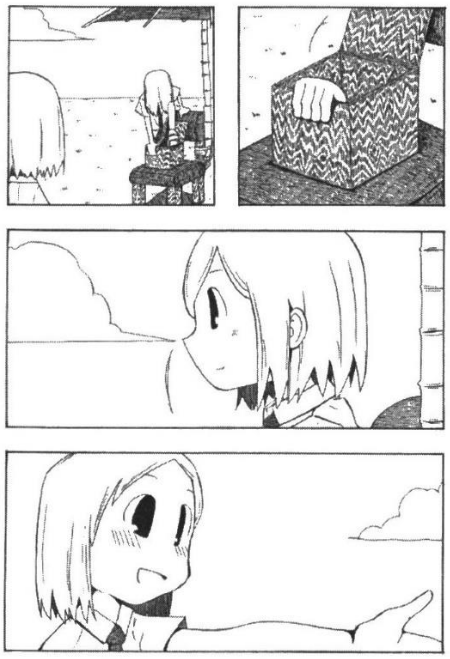
At the beginning of the story, the Girl caught a wooden box that fell from the sky. This box is a symbol of another person's mind, and the wood grain is a symbol of passing time. Thus, the depiction of the Girl holding the wooden box dearly and gazing at its pattern can be interpreted as her accepting the feelings of others and perceiving the change of time as it flows by.

After a while, the Girl meets a young girl wearing teru teru bōzu. This young girl was the original owner of the wooden box and a symbol of the Other. The Girl wishes to communicate with her, but her wish is not granted, as the young girl vanishes the moment the rain stops.

Meanwhile, the snot bubble that the Girl had inflated during her nap had also died, unnoticed. The experiences of separating from the young girl and the death of the snot bubble make her keenly aware of the passage of time. The Girl transforms her lonely feelings into rain, where "each drop is a worry," and soaks herself in nostalgia for the person who is no longer there.

So, what happened to the Girl after her emotions were stirred by loneliness? Befitting a Kūkūjakujaku Manga, the ending was something no one could have predicted.

After the rain from inside the umbrella stops and her tears dry, the Girl stands blankly in front of the wooden box. Suddenly, the lid of the wooden box opens, and a person with the exact same appearance as her crawls out. In the final scene, the Girl has an encounter with her "other self."



From *Kokoro*, page 15.

The depiction of confronting an "other self" is more absurd than anything before. However, by again referring to Hane, we can understand the meaning of this motif.

The girl in *Hane* realized her true identity at the end of the story. She realized that the world in the story was a spiritual world within the mind of another, and she was merely an image someone had created.

Conversely, the wooden box in *Kokoro* was a symbol of the young girl = the mind of the Other. If so, the entity that emerges from inside the wooden box can be interpreted as the image of the Girl as another person had imagined her. Although she looks exactly like the real Girl, she is, in the end, merely a being someone else created in their mind. This was the true identity of the other girl who emerged from the wooden box.

The final scene of this work further developed the themes of *Hane*, which depicted the Girl "as she is seen by others." In other words, it depicted the Girl who sees her "self as seen by others." There is a paradox in the conclusion: by accepting and holding onto the mind of the Other, she meets the image of herself that the Other had created.

The key point is that she could only meet her other self by sincerely confronting the other person. The Girl held the wooden box, a symbol of another person's mind, the entire time. Later, through the depiction of the rain, she continuously poured her thoughts onto the box. By contemplating the other person to the fullest extent, she was finally able to meet the image of herself that the other had created.

In the final scene, the Girl, having met her "self as seen by others," smiles and extends her hand. The girls then join hands and depart for a distant, unknown destination.

We can only speculate where they went. The key to understanding is the smile on the Girl's face. Until this point, the Girl had not shown her emotions, and her expression had not changed even when she shed tears. However, after meeting her other self, her face brightens as if she were a different person. From this depiction, we can infer that she has come to terms with the unrecoverable past.

This world is fleeting, and the loneliness of separation is inevitable. However, on the other hand, this flowing time is also full of possibilities for new encounters.

The Girl seems to have realized this. By contemplating the Other and meeting her other self, she was able to think positively about the flow and change of passing time. This state of mind, which embraces change, is likely a reflection of Arawi's own feelings while writing this work.

Up to this point, we have deciphered the story and themes of Kokoro by comparing the motifs that appeared in the work with those in his previous works. Since the depictions are rich with implications, it is likely possible to have interpretations different from the one in this book. However, the fact remains that the motifs of the wooden box, wood grain, snot bubble, the Other, and rain reappear throughout Arawi's works. The method of extracting meaning from these motifs should still be effective.

And the "other self" who appeared at the end of Kokoro, as well as the Girl's departure on a journey, were also motifs that would reappear. This subject matter is again depicted as a crucial clue to understanding his later manga, *Milestone* and *Hirake!*. This work, completed as a Kūkūjakujaku Manga, also became the source of inspiration for his next creations.

---

[1]. The catalog for Comitia, *Tia's Magazine*, which lists participating circles, has a section called "Push & Review" where attendees can recommend outstanding publications. In this section, *Hane*, *Sasameyuki*, and *Homare* were featured in *Tia's Magazine* 66, 69, and 70, respectively. This shows that Arawi's self-produced manga was gaining support from enthusiastic readers at the time.

[2]. In *Helvetica Standard* "16," Arawi is shown drawing a manga name in preparation for exhibiting at Comitia 68. This suggests that while Arawi may have created a name for the prototype of *Kokoro*, he ultimately did not base his final work on it, choosing instead to improvise and write the current *Kokoro*.

[3]. As for foreign literary authors Arawi enjoyed, Kurt Vonnegut is another one. Tributes to Vonnegut's books appear in *Nichijou*, with *The Sirens of Titan* in the Author's Profile of Volume 2 and *Cat's Cradle* on page 137 of Volume 3 and page 41 of Volume 9. See also Note 4 in "Primary Experiences #2" of this book for more on Vonnegut.

[4]. Arawi's initial drawing of wood grain was on a wooden fence in the background of Inpū. After that, he said that the process of meticulously drawing the wood grain pattern on the wooden boards in Hane felt enjoyable, and he began to incorporate it into his work intentionally [From a comment on the Himarayairuka BBS, November 21, 2003]. In fact, background wood grain patterns can be seen in his next work, *Homare*, and his works from *Nichijou* onward. The wood grain pattern became more than just a motif; it became a design continuously carried on in Arawi's works.

[5]. Himarayairuka, "Found Things," on September 10, 2003, contained the following passage about the snot bubble: "Even snot bubbles are alive, you know. I'm tired, so I'm going to sleep, and you must never wake me up, okay? You're smart, so you get it, right?" This passage succinctly describes the snot bubble in this work, which, precisely because it is alive, also meets its death.

The Unknown Past is New: *Helvetica Standard* Mid-Period (May–July 2004)

First Appearance Information for Chapters 18–44:

- Helvetica Standard 18 - May 2004
- Helvetica Standard 19–20 - May 2004
- Helvetica Standard 21: "Kakkoii to wa Kōyū Koto daro! no Maki" (カッコイイとはこういう事だろ！の巻, "The Chapter of 'This is What Cool Is!'") - Around May 13, 2004
- Helvetica Standard 22 - May 2004
- Helvetica Standard 23: "Boris Vian ga Miete Kita yo." (ボリスヴィアンが見えてきたよ, "I Can See Boris Vian Now") - May 2004
- Helvetica Standard 24: "Sayonara Sayonara Coca-Cola: Arawi" (さよならさよならコカコーラ あらゐ, "Goodbye Goodbye Coca-Cola: Arawi") - May 2004
- Helvetica Standard 25: "yappari ka-torijjiga-iine" ("The Cartridges are Still the Best") - Around May 17, 2004
- Helvetica Standard 26 - May 2004

  (Note: Remade in *Kazemachi*, published in the April 2006 issue of *Monthly Comic Flapper*; Remade in Chapter 72 of *Nichijou* Volume 4)
- Helvetica Standard 27 - May 2004
- Helvetica Standard 28: Hōkago Rhapsody (放課後ラプソディー, "After-School Rhapsody") - May 2004

  (Note: Remade in *Kazemachi*, published in the February 2006 issue of *Monthly Comic Flapper*)
- Helvetica Standard 29 da yo.: Getsuyōbi no Hanashi (月曜日の話, "Monday's Story") - Around June 1, 2004
- Helvetica Standard 30 - Around June 5, 2004
- Helvetica Standard 31 - June 2004
- Helvetica Standard 32: Herubechika Sutandādo - June 2004

  (Note: Remade in *Kazemachi*, published in the March 2006 issue of *Monthly Comic Flapper*)
- Helvetica Standard Sono Sanjūsan (33): an-pang - June 2004

  (Note: Remade in *Kazemachi*, published in the February 2006 issue of *Monthly Comic Flapper*)
- Helvetica Standard 34: Kokkuri Shōjo to Tōhoku no Kami. no Maki (コックリ少女と東北の神。の巻, "The Chapter of Kokkuri Girl and the God of Tohoku.")

(Note: Remade in the commercial serialization of *Helvetica Standard*, "04 Chirashizushi.")

- Helvetica Standard 35: "[Ayamachite wa aratameru ni habakaru koto nakare] Ayamachi o okashita toki wa, sugu aratameyo. Sukoshi mo enryo suru hitsuyō wa nai" (【過ちは改むるに憚ることなかれ】過ちをおかしたときはすぐ改めよ。少しも遠慮する必要はない, "When you make a mistake, correct it immediately. There is no need for any hesitation.") - June–July 2004
- Helvetica Standard 36: Kahō o Matteitara Rentaru Mikka mo Sugite Mashita (果報を待っていたらレンタル三日も過ぎてました, "Waiting for Good Fortune, Three Days of Rental Passed") - July 2004
- Helvetica Standard 37: Tanabata Sokutō (たなばた即答, "Tanabata Instant Reply") - Around July 7, 2004
- Helvetica Standard 38 - July 2004
- Helvetica Standard 39 - July 2004
- Helvetica Standard 40 - July 2004
- Helvetica Standard 41: THE TV - July 2004
- Helvetica Standard 42 - July 2004
- Helvetica Standard 43 - July 2004
- Helvetica Standard 44: Hōshin (方針, "Policy") - Around July 29, 2004
  (Note: Remade in *Kazemachi*, published in the March 2006 issue of *Monthly Comic Flapper*)

Past Games and the "Nostalgia Correction"

Helvetica Standard was composed of three genres: essay, outrageous gag, and peaceful life in an absurd world. Furthermore, the work's Kūkūjakujaku Manga element—the idea of creating intuitively without thinking—developed into *Kokoro*.

Beyond these, there is a common element that must not be overlooked in interpreting this work: the frequent incorporation of Arawi's favorite game topics across the chapters.

First, "2" chronicles Arawi playing *Dragon Quest III*. Following this, "3" features an illustration of Takahashi Meijin, and the marginal text mentions the PlayStation 2 version of *Dragon Quest V*, which was soon to be released. "4" includes a discussion about buying *Weekly Famitsū* and a reference to the snack toy "Game Sound Museum ~Famicom Edition~."

Later, "12" features Dragon Quest V again, and "13" and "15" discuss less-known game consoles like the Atari Lynx, Atari Jaguar, and Virtual Boy. In "18" and "25," he is seen playing *Nobunaga's Ambition: Bushō Fūunroku* [1] and *Raid on Bungeling Bay*. A little later, "31" and "49" mention games for the latest console at the time (PlayStation 2), such as *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* and *Seaman*. However, the works that have the strongest presence in the comic are those from the 1980s. Numerous games Arawi was obsessed with during his elementary and junior high school years were interspersed alongside his progress reports and absurd gags.

Why did this work incorporate topics of nostalgic games? It is likely because the idea of "nostalgia correction (思い出補正, Omoide Hosei)" was at its root [2].

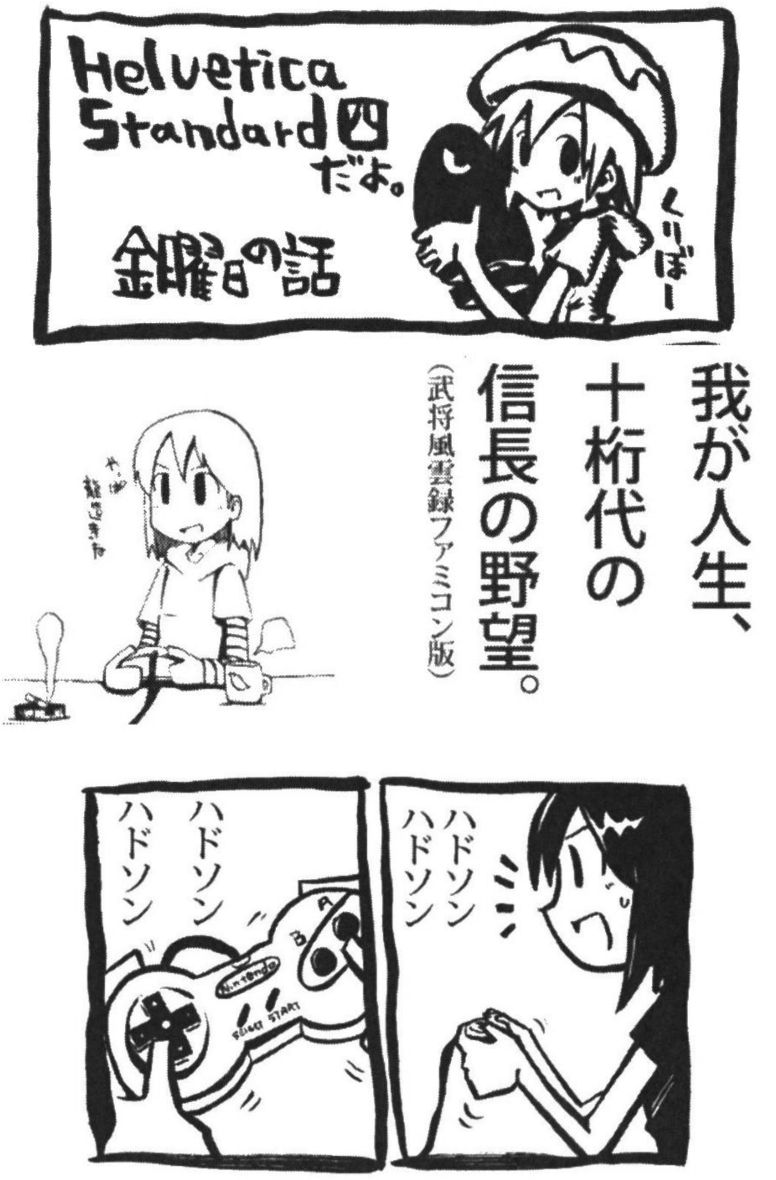
Nostalgia correction is an internet slang term that refers to the human tendency to romanticize and beautify old memories. It is typically used to admonish people who elevate past events while negating the present.

However, Arawi takes a positive view of this nostalgia correction. He assessed that "In exchange for growing older, humans can gain the wonderful thing called nostalgia correction" [3].

> ***In exchange for growing older,***
> ***humans must gain the wonderful thing called nostalgia correction.***
> ***Since you're going to get it anyway, you have to utilize it to the fullest when you can.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "Chambre" (シャンブル), February 17, 2009]

Arawi actively employs nostalgia correction after reflecting on his student days. He repeatedly incorporated topics about games into *Helvetica Standard* as enjoyable past memories.

This work, which depicts memories that feel "somehow good," is full of liveliness and brightness. As a result, the style of this work became more pop than his previous Comitia publications.


Helvetica Standard 四 だよ。
金曜日の話
くりぼー
我が人生、十桁代の信長の野望。
（武将風雲録ファミコン版）
ハドソン ハドソン
ハドソン ハドソン
Nintendo
SELECT START
B
A

From *Helvetica Standard* "4" (Top), "18" (Middle), "25" (Bottom).

The frequent appearance of game topics is also largely attributable to Tamakichi Sakura's *Shiawase no Katachi*. As repeatedly mentioned, Arawi has been influenced by Tamakichi Sakura's manga since childhood. *Shiawase no Katachi*, which started as a game parody manga and later transitioned into an essay manga, was undoubtedly on his mind when he wrote this work. Coincidentally, *Shiawase no Katachi* is a manga for which Arawi has the "strongest nostalgia correction." This work was established by combining "nostalgia correction" for past games and "nostalgia correction" for Tamakichi [4].

> ***My first contact with Tamakichi Sakura was Shiawase no Katachi Special. But even if I looked at it now, my "emotion from that time" might not be conveyed. Because the magic of nostalgia correction is at its strongest.***
> ***In the past, someone who read Macaroni Hōrensō in real-time intensely recommended Tsubame Kamogawa's work. It was very interesting and a gag manga that provided a lot to learn from. But since I didn't have the nostalgia correction for it, I'm not confident if I could be as moved as that person.***
> [From an interview for this book]

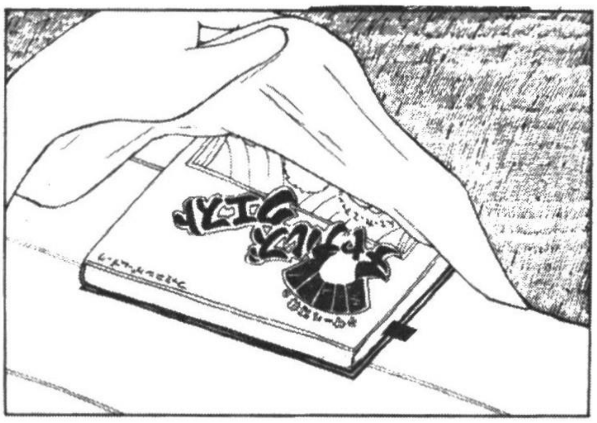
On the other hand, past games are also cited in this work for purposes other than mere recollection. There are episodes where minor old works are viewed from a detached perspective, sublimating them into comical humor.

For example, "26" and "27" feature the game *Emoyan no 10-bai Pro Yakyū: C League-Hen* (エモやんの 10 倍プロ野球, "Emoyan's 10x Pro Baseball: Central League Edition"), supervised by former professional baseball player Motonori Emoto. This baseball game became famous among enthusiasts precisely because of its abnormally high difficulty and crude programming. Arawi, aware of this, deliberately introduced the Emoyan game cartridge abruptly to elicit laughter from the reader.

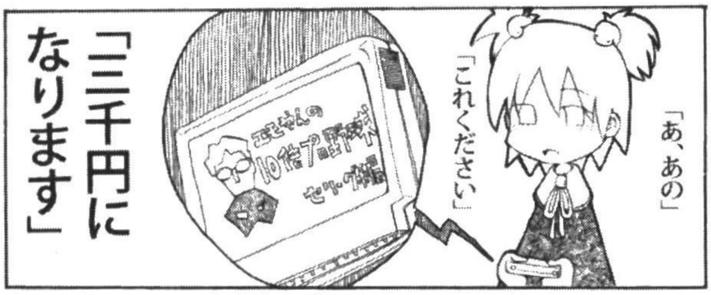
Similarly, "36" features *Super Monkey Daibōken* (スーパーモンキー大冒険, "Super Monkey's Great Adventure"), which became known precisely because of its poor reputation. Arawi took this game to a used game store, but the appraisal price was, astonishingly, "negative 100 yen." The humor in this episode lies in the ridiculousness of a rare old game being given an outrageous buyback price [4].

In "47," a girl visiting the room of a close male senior notices a book hidden under his bed. Thinking it might be something perverted, she reaches under the bed and finds the strategy guide for *LaSalle Ishii no Child's Quest* (ラ・サール石井のチャイルズクエスト, "LaSalle Ishii's Child's Quest"). The unexpectedness of discovering a booklet that a young person of today would not likely own highlights the gag in this work.

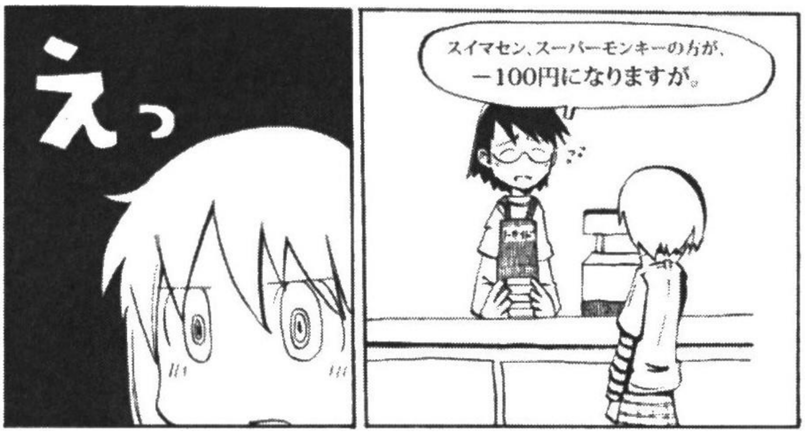
It can be said that by not only being enthusiastic about past games but also using them as material from a cynical angle, *Helvetica Standard* acquired a sense of "silliness" as a gag manga.



From Helvetica Standard "47": The strategy guide for *LaSalle Ishii no Child's Quest*.


「あ、あの」
「これください」
エモやんの
10倍プロ野球
セ・リーグ編
「三千円になります」

From *Helvetica Standard* "26": The cartridge for *Emoyan no 10-bai Pro Yakyū: C League-Hen*.


スイマセン、スーパーモンキーの方が、ー100円になりますが。
えっ

From *Helvetica Standard* "36": Arawi is stunned that the appraisal price for *Super Monkey Daibōken* is "negative 100 yen."

Jazz and Freedom, A Source of the Past

Although not directly reflected in the work, *Helvetica Standard* used 1960s jazz numbers as its theme music. Arawi cited Art Blakey's "Moanin'" as a song that represents his work.

> ***I truly love "Moanin'." It's also nice that Art Blakey loves Japan. He must love standards, I guess. In the past, I used to think I wanted to listen to more hardcore stuff and understand it, but now, I just like what I like when I hear it (laughs).***
> [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]

"Moanin'" is a jazz standard, an approachable and familiar song. *Helvetica Standard*, too, with its references to past games, has a more accessible and pop art style than his previous works. Whether by coincidence or fate, the shared use of the word "standard" shows a certain compatibility between standard jazz and *Helvetica Standard*.

Furthermore, the fact that Arawi began to genuinely enjoy jazz from this period onwards is another factor that links the two. After immersing himself in *Tokiwa-sō no Seishun*, Arawi began to actively seek out Showa-era pop music, and as an extension of that, he became familiar with jazz music from before he was born [5].

Another link between the two may be their use of improvisation. In the world of modern jazz, free improvisation, where musicians play notes without being tied to a score, is considered one of its greatest pleasures. Helvetica Standard, on the other hand, was a Kūkūjakujaku Manga in which Arawi drew what he found interesting in the moment, following his impulses. Arawi, who said he wanted to grasp manga by sensation rather than logic, was, in a sense, performing an impromptu concert on the manuscript paper.

Incidentally, he said that the catalysts for him getting into jazz were "My Favorite Things" and "Work Song." The former was used in the Central Japan Railway Company promotion "Sōda, Kyōto Ikō" (そうだ、京都行こう, "That's right, let's go to Kyoto"), and the latter was used in a commercial for Taishō Pharmaceutical's tonic "Samon," making them songs he was already familiar with.

> ***When I was a high schooler working at a bento shop, I had a senior who would say, "Jazz is great~." The only jazz I knew at the time was "My Favorite Things" from the "Let's Go to Kyoto" commercial, so I borrowed the album it was on, Coltrane's Giant Steps, a Cannonball Adderley album, and a few others. Except for "Let's Go to Kyoto," they all sounded like the same song, so I returned them to my senior. When I told him they all sounded the same except for the one***

> ***from the commercial, he said, "That can't be, this was used in a commercial!" That was "Work Song." It just sounded cool, so I borrowed and recorded it again and listened to it. So, "Work Song" somehow became "My Favorite Things."***
> [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]

When one deconstructs jazz, its music is deeply rooted in the history of resistance against racial discrimination and authority. However, Arawi does not seem to view jazz in this way, as evidenced by his journey of falling in love with it through television commercials.

Rather, it is more fitting to think that he enjoyed it as a pop culture form, much like the games he referenced in *Helvetica Standard*. He purely embraced the pleasantness of the jazz sounds and drew this work improvisationally, inspired by its freedom of expression.

Helvetica Standard was established by incorporating culture from the Showa period, which included the video games he was obsessed with as a child, the jazz that was popular before he was born, and the manga created during the Tokiwa-sō era.

Arawi was aware of this, and in the afterword of the compiled volume of *Helvetica Standard*, published in 2009, he dated it as August 23, "Showa 85." Because he understood the eras that influenced him, he chose to write "Showa" instead of the then-current era, "Heisei."

What's important is that even in the works he released after this, his attitude of learning from the past remained unchanged. After *Helvetica Standard*, he moved away from contemporary artists and began to seek inspiration from culture from the 1980s and earlier [6].

He spoke about the reason for getting inspiration from pre-Showa culture:

> ***I probably am not very interested in "the present." The "past" I don't know is the same as the "future" for me. [...] Maybe the unknown past is the best. The unknown past is new. That's what I might have wanted to say. [...]***
> ***The culture from a generation ago—I didn't experience it, but it seems so mature. It's the future, but it's a future that will never come. I was a child during the bubble period, so the movies, things, and music made during that time... when I find something fun there that I didn't know about, it's so great. Maybe this is a somehow sensational thing. It's better than finding something new and fun now.***
> [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]

He did not incorporate past cultures simply to indulge in nostalgia. Instead, he was interested in past cultures because he found joy in the act of getting to know an "unknown past" he had never encountered before.

It's also worth noting that he said the reason he is interested in unknown creations from the past might be a "sensation." Here again, the subject matter for the story was chosen in a Kūkūjakujaku way, by sensation rather than by thought.

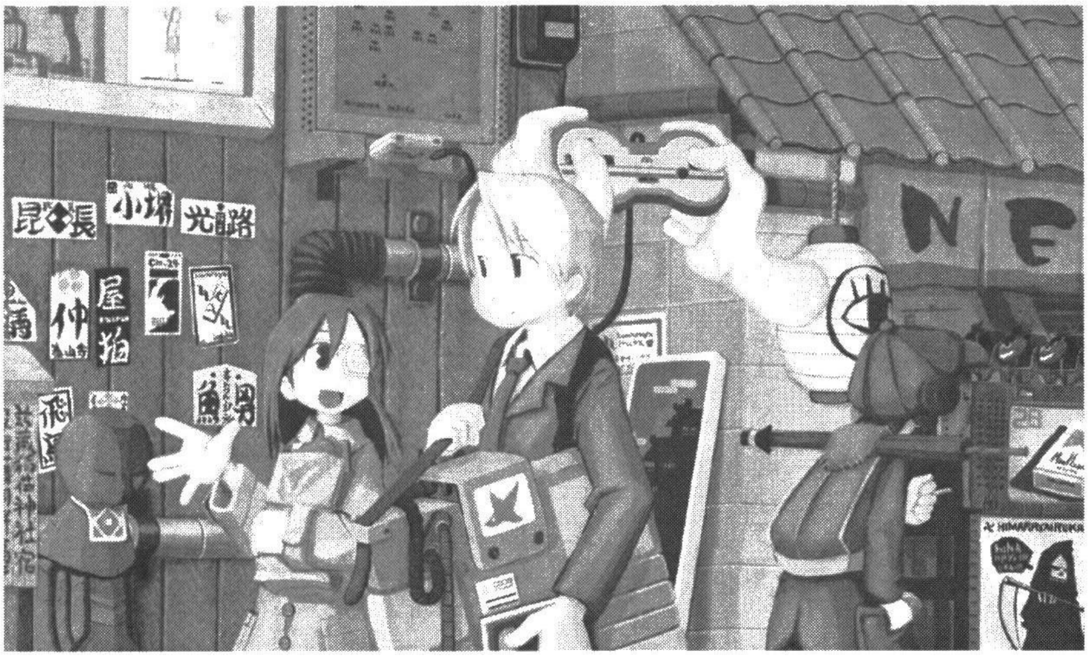
Arawi adds a metaphorical supplement to this sensation of his, saying that the "unknown past" corresponds to the "clear water of a source."

> ***I also think there's a sense of the clear water of a source. [...] I recently read a manga of Ultra Seven, and the expression is so good. It's not of the present but it's new. It's been filtered out now, but I felt the lump, the power that came before it. [...] When I see something like that, I feel like, "I've found my own source!" Well, within myself, anyway.***
> [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]

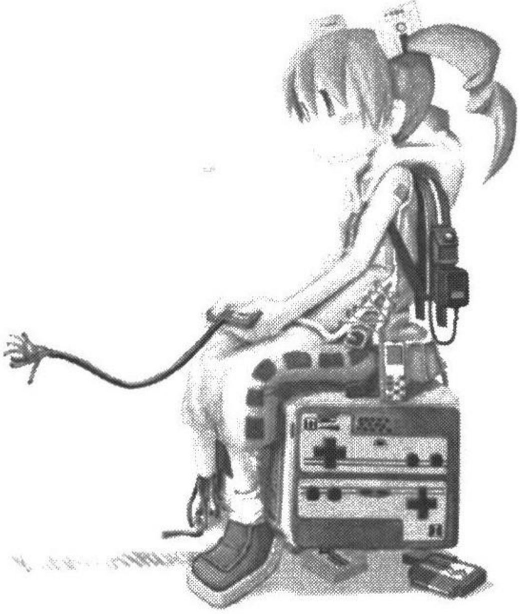
Showa-era popular culture from a generation ago had certain crudities due to the lack of established methods, and some parts may seem strange due to the differences in the sense of the times. Arawi flipped these elements around in his mind and found a sense of excess in the unrefined expressions and a sense of freshness in the expressions that do not fit with the present.

Of course, many past creations are highly polished because they were trailblazers in their field. But at the same time, he wanted to incorporate the raw charm of the past that "has been filtered out now."

By looking back at the past and enjoying his "own source," *Helvetica Standard* was able to establish its individuality. Furthermore, the creation of this work was a great reference for Arawi in creating the unique atmosphere of his own works.



An illustration published in 2004. A unique worldview is created by drawing numerous retro items in the background.



The illustration "continue," published around February 2004. This illustration was displayed at the Famicom exhibition "Café Bar 303: Fami-tte Iitomo!" (カフェバー303 ファミっていいとも！, "Café Bar 303: It's Okay to Famicom! ") held in Gunma Prefecture from May 12–20, 2012.

Wakaba Heights and "Requiem"

Time jumps to May 2010. Arawi, who was already a professional manga artist, published a copy book of writings titled *Kioku-Seki* (記憶席, "Memory Seat") at Comitia 92 [7].

In the essay "Requiem," written for this book, he recalls his memories of living in Wakaba Heights. His memories of 2004, when he was living in an apartment room drawing *Helvetica Standard* while aiming to become a manga artist, held a special meaning for him.

> ***I used to live in a run-down, cracked apartment about a three-minute walk from Asagaya Station.***
> ***That is where I came to know creative activity.***
> ***That is where I began the joy of creative activity.***
> ***That is where I began drawing Helvetica Standard.***
> ***The days spent there,***
> ***made me feel like the world around me was all possibility, and I thought that thinking and creating were everything in this world.***
> ***Other people's perceptions were secondary.***
> ***I somehow desperately loved creating, and even the doodles I drew haphazardly,***
> ***they were treasures.***
> ***That time,***
> ***was a castle that only had a donjon for me, the one who was experiencing a delayed coming-of-age.***
> [From "Requiem," included in *Kioku-Seki*]

In *Manga Michi*, which Arawi had thoroughly read, there is a scene where Hiroo Terada recites his original song, the "Tokiwa-sō Anthem," to encourage the manga artists who gathered there. This song included the following lines: "A mere four-and-a-half tatami room, a cramped castle for each, but tomorrow it will be a huge Manga Castle, this fortress that is our foundation." [8]

Looking back at "Requiem" with the "Tokiwa-sō Anthem" in mind, the reason he compares Wakaba Heights to "a castle that only had a donjon" becomes clear. It was because he superimposed himself onto the residents of Tokiwa-sō that he referred to his own apartment as a "castle."

Wakaba Heights was a memorable place, the "fortress" where he worked on *Helvetica Standard* dreaming of a huge Manga Castle tomorrow and built the foundation that led him to become a professional manga artist.

To reiterate, Arawi at this time lived the life of an office worker at Shinkōsha during the day, and at night, he faced his manuscript, dreaming of becoming a manga artist. There was an impatience to become a professional quickly, but more than that, he was filled with the joy of the manga-drawing life itself.

Furthermore, even when he was not drawing manga, he constantly felt a sense of exhilaration. This was because he felt that "the world around me was all possibility, and I thought that thinking and creating were everything in this world." By living a life where he continually drew essay manga, he realized that every event could be a source of inspiration for a creative work [9].

Helvetica Standard was a work drawn by sensation, not logic. Therefore, it accurately reflected Arawi's emotions at the time. The pop art style of this work was born, above all, from the joy of drawing manga at Wakaba Heights.

> ***The joy of the rain.***
> ***The joy of the tatami mats.***
> ***The joy of the cracks in the wall.***
> ***The joy of the Hitokuchi Chaya (Snack Shop).***
> ***The joy of going to FamilyMart late at night.***
> ***The joy of the shared shower for four rooms.***
> ***The joy of drawing illustrations.***
> ***The joy of drawing manga.***
> ***It's not an exaggeration to say that all those joys were packed into that time.***
> [From "Requiem," included in *Kioku-Seki*]

The building of Wakaba Heights still exists today (2023), even at the time the essay was written. However, the Wakaba Heights filled with Arawi's memories only exists in his memory. The essay is titled "Requiem" precisely because he is writing a letter of gratitude to the apartment as if it were a being no longer in this world.

Nonetheless, Arawi's writing does not convey a lonely atmosphere. On the contrary, it is filled with an expression of joy, as is evident in the following quote:

> ***The intention learned there and sustained.***
> ***The will that strongly survives at the foundation,***

> ***I believe it is the will to continue thinking, "Isn't there something fun somewhere?"***
> ***If you feel even a little possibility, even just one, in this world.***
> ***That strength to think, "I have one dream, and I have two dreams!"***
> ***Gaining that weapon,***
> ***is a treasure to me.***
> [From "Requiem," included in *Kioku-Seki*]

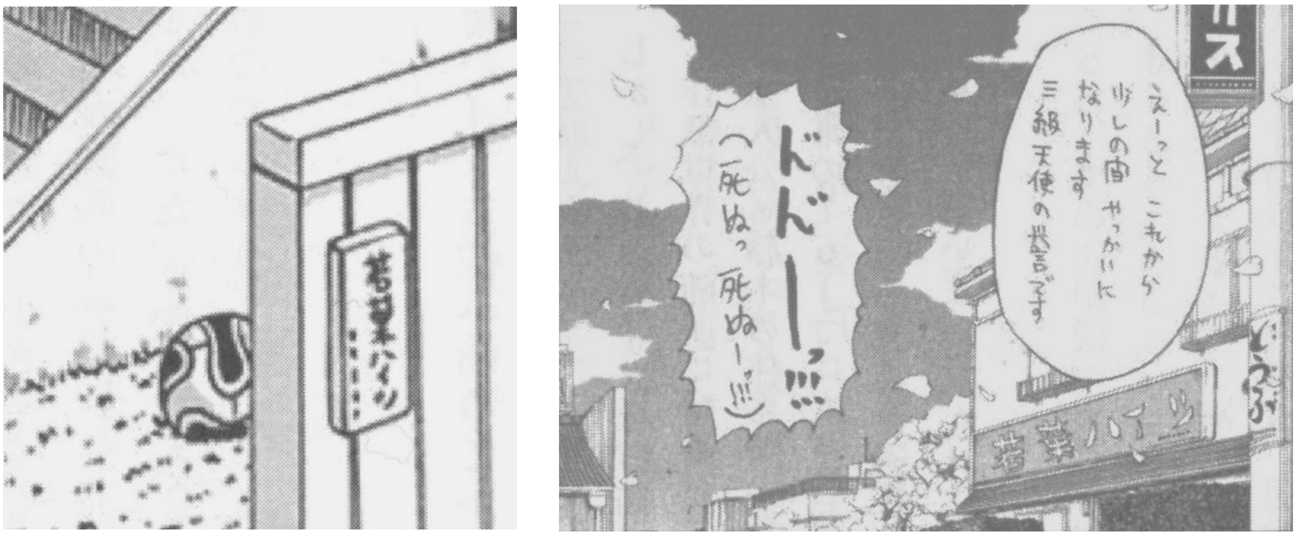
What he learned from life at Wakaba Heights and the writing of *Helvetica Standard* was the will to keep thinking, "Isn't there something fun somewhere?" Arawi, who had already affirmed himself as a manga artist through reading *Manga Michi*, was now able to affirm the entire world by continuing to draw manga.

"If you feel even a little possibility, even just one, in this world, I have one dream, and I have two dreams." The inclination to value things he "somehow likes," which forms the foundation of Arawi's view of manga, has been seen before. However, through the days of writing *Helvetica Standard*, this tendency became solidified.

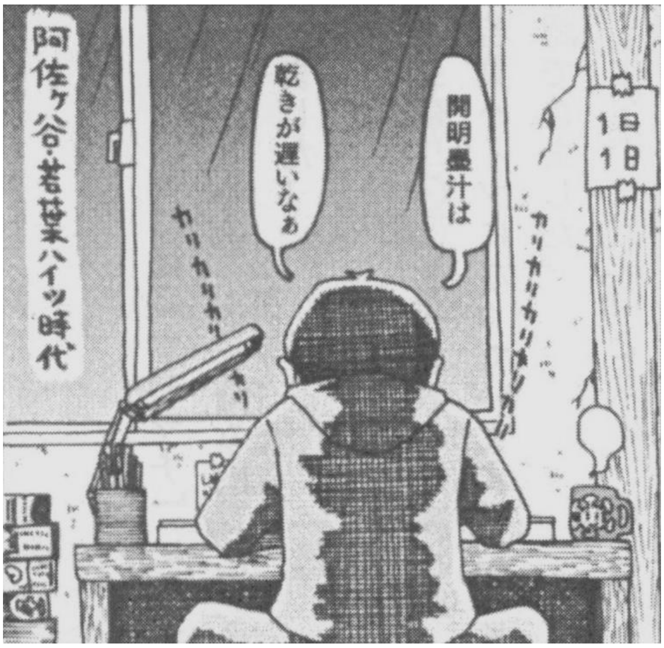
In 2006, the third year after moving into Wakaba Heights, Arawi made his long-awaited commercial manga debut with *Kazemachi*. At the time he took his first step as a professional manga artist, he left the apartment and moved to Hachiōji City in Tokyo [10].

However, Wakaba Heights never faded from the creator's mind. The name of this memorable building is preserved in various parts of his works. For example, in the short manga *Homare* (誉, Honor/Plaise), published in 2007, the protagonist Fujiki's apartment is named Wakaba Heights. The nameplate for Wakaba Heights can also be confirmed in *Nichijou* Volume 9, Chapter 161.

The memorable home where he spent his youth as a manga artist, along with those joyful memories, continued to live on in his works, even after he moved out.


えーっと これから 少しの間 やっかいに なります 三級天使の誉です
どどーん!!!
(死ぬっ 死ぬー!!!)
若葉ハイツ
若葉ハイツ

From *Nichijou* Volume 9, page 100 (Left) and *Homare*, page 12 (Right): A nameplate reading "若葉ハイツ" (Wakaba Heights) can be seen.


1日 1日
開明墨汁は
乾きが遅いなぁ
カリカリカリカリ
カリカリカリカリ
阿佐ケ谷・若葉ハイツ時代

From Illustration in "Manga Michi to," from Fujiko Fujio A's *Manga Michi* Shogakukan Gamanga Books Edition, Volume 6: The Kaimei sumi ink mentioned in this illustration was the ink used in the story of *Manga Michi*.

---

[1]. In the work, Arawi (depicted as the figure of the girl) is shown using Takanobu Ryūzōji, a Sengoku period daimyō of Hizen Province, when playing *Nobunaga's Ambition*. Ryūzōji must have been Arawi's favorite warlord. In the commercial serialized version of *Helvetica Standard*, he names Ryūzōji's right-hand man, Naoshige Nabeshima, as his favorite warlord, giving the reason that he was "the one I relied on the most" in the game.

[2]. Arawi also mentioned "nostalgia correction" in his testimonial for the CD "Jikan Ryokō: DJ Kazu no Ano Koro Anison MIX" (時間旅行 DJ 和のあの頃アニソン MIX, "Time Travel: DJ Kazu's Anime Song Mix from Back Then"), for which he drew the jacket illustration. "Nostalgia correction is a privilege and a magic that can only be used by those who have aged. This album contains music that has a high chance of having that magic cast upon it. I think music under that spell will sparkle at quite a high rate. Please, pour yourself a drink and take a time trip back to those days."

[3]. He applied this sentiment to the music band Unicorn, whose songs he had copied and played in high school. For Arawi, music may be the form of entertainment where "nostalgia correction" is most easily activated.

[4]. The gag of a buyback price receiving a negative appraisal was remade 12 years later in *CITY* Chapter 5. In that story, the main character Nagumo's furniture is appraised at "negative 7,000 yen."

[5]. Referring to Himarayairuka, Arawi primarily listened to contemporary Japanese music until 2003. The lyrics of the following Japanese musicians were quoted on the website between September 2002 and June 2003: Kirinji, Sadistic Mika Band, Ringo Shiina, Bump of Chicken, Cornelius, Kazuyoshi Saitō, Happy End, Quruli, Super Butter Dog, Kishidan, Going Steady, Ginkgo Boyz, and Yuki. It is thought that from 2004 onwards, he broadened his range of interest to music from the Showa era and earlier.

[6]. An exception to Arawi's referencing of past culture is the names of European football players. While he has mostly taken information from the Showa period for domestic

popular culture since 2004, he checks the latest information on the European football leagues and quotes the names of active players in the background of his work.

[7]. *Kioku-seki* was distributed on consignment by Arawi's friend Sawada's circle, Dois Volante. It contains 13 texts in total, with all but the newly written "Requiem" being a re-recording of articles from the kumomadori blog Arawi operated at the time. The chapter titles and original appearance information are as follows: "Preface" (November 19, 2007, エスカベーター [Escavator]), "Taketoshi" (たけとし, October 21, 2008), "Yokkun" (よっくん, October 29, 2008), "Right in Front, And Summer, It's Our Everyday" (目の前だって、夏だって、僕らの日常なのだ, July 22, 2008), "Croquette Bun" (コロッケパン, April 1, 2009), "Hideo" (英雄, June 20, 2009), "Next Strategy over Disappointment" (落胆よりも次の策, June 7, 2007), "MØMIN" (October 23, 2009), "Relief Wave" (December 1, 2009), "John Mark Wear" (ジョン・マック・ウェアー, November 4, 2007, Note: The actual first appearance was Himarayairuka, November 11, 2003), "Neighbor Without a Face" (姿なき隣人, August 29, 2007), "Afterword" (あとがき, December 12, 2007, "Mighty," [強大な]). Only "Me, Now, and Empathy" (私の今と共感) and "Requiem" were newly written.

[8]. *Fujiko Fujio A Digital Selection: Manga Michi* Volume 22, page 100.

[9]. Looking at the publication month for each chapter of *Helvetica Standard*, "1"–"16" were posted in March–April, "17"–"28" in May, "29"–"35" in June, and "36"–"44" in July. From this, it can be said that he was writing and publishing a new manga page on average once every 3–4 days.

[10]. In kumomadori blog, "Holiday Dial" (休日ダイヤ), on September 30, 2007, Arawi mentions that a year and a half had passed since he moved to Hachiōji. Calculating backward from this, it is believed he moved around March 2006.

Supplement: Creative Works Not Covered in Sections "II"–"V" (2002–2004)

Up to this point, our investigation and analysis have primarily focused on the self-produced manga Arawi presented at Comitia and the web manga posted on Himarayairuka.

However, we have not had the opportunity to extensively discuss his creative works other than manga and illustrations. Therefore, this "Supplement" will introduce the diverse creative activities from around 2002 to 2004 that were not fully covered in the main body of this text.

Web Radio Broadcasting

One particularly interesting activity is his web radio broadcasting. The history of his radio broadcasting is old, dating back to the summer of 2002, before he aimed to become a manga artist, when he was running a fan site for *Azumanga Daioh*. At that time, Arawi launched a website for radio broadcasts called Tengoku Café (天国カフェ, "Heaven Café") and hosted a live streaming program called *Tengoku Hōsō* with friends he met online.

At the time, only four or five friends, including Daioki, listened to *Tengoku Hōsō*. Nevertheless, he recounts that they spent enjoyable, friendly time as personalities who planned various projects [1].

After launching Himarayairuka, he changed the name to *Himaraya Nights* (ヒマラヤナイツ) and broadcasted web radio in the first half of 2003. This program seems to have been more like a radio DJ show, playing his favorite music, rather than a talk show with personalities [2].

In 2004, he briefly returned to the name *Tengoku Hōsō* before entering a period of dormancy. *Tengoku Hōsō* was then revived in 2007, the year after he debuted as a professional manga artist [3].

From 2008 onward, the program was renamed *kumomadori Radio* and it became customary to host live audio and video broadcasts during the months when his compiled volumes were released or at the end of the year. This broadcast has continued to the present (2023), though it has hopped between host sites [4].

DTM (Desktop Music) Composition

In terms of music-related activities, the production of DTM (Desktop Music) is notable. In October 2003, after acquiring the music production software ACID Pro, he began creating his own music. Along with the bass guitar he had been playing as a hobby, he released his first self-produced DTM, "Tobazu Tori, " that same month.

Then, in May 2004, after completing his second song, "Nezu no Neko" (寝ずの猫, Sleepless Cat), he began creating a self-produced CD. He released the original CD *ugokazu* (Motionless), which included the two songs and the audio from *Tengoku Hōsō*. *ugokazu* was sold at Kansai Comitia 24 along with the second edition of *Sasameyuki*, which was being distributed at the same time.

In June, he formed the music unit "Kremlin no Tō" (クレムリの塔, "Tower of the Kremlin") with his relative in Tokyo, Hiroshi, after they hit it off [5]. They enjoyed collaborating with the like-minded Hiroshi and produced several songs, but the unit naturally dissolved as both became busy with work [6].

Free Paper Editing and Production

In the second half of 2004, Arawi was also preparing to create works in collaboration with others, besides "Kremlin no Tō." Inspired by the free information magazines placed at a nearby Tsutaya, he decided he wanted to publish a free paper himself.

He published the free paper *Mogura Vol.0* (もぐら Vol.0, "Mole Vol.0") at Comitia 69, co-authored with his colleague from Shinkōsha, Takeo Maeda [8]. He also published a free paper titled *shouwa. Ichi* by himself.

Arawi was quite enthusiastic about the publication of *Mogura* at the time. He called himself the editor-in-chief, invited Takuya Mitomi in addition to Maeda, and proactively held production meetings for the booklet [9]. However, after he began to dedicate himself to drawing manga in 2005, the plans for the second issue of *Mogura* were canceled.

Contribution to Collaborative Dōjinshi Manga Magazines

Creative activities in collaboration with others also include works contributed to friends' dōjinshi manga magazines. In addition to the manga based on *Final Fantasy XI* and *Azumanga Daioh* already introduced, Arawi contributed two guest manuscripts [10].

The first was a manga based on the anime *R.O.D. -the TV-*. Arawi did not know about the anime initially, but once he started watching, he was overwhelmed by its unique world, where super-powered characters fight by manipulating huge amounts of paper.

Arawi was so fascinated that he spent half a day watching all 26 episodes in one sitting [11], and he was driven to write a manga. The finished work was published in the dōjinshi manga magazine of Pu-pāzu, a circle belonging to a senior employee at Shinkōsha, and was distributed at Comiket 66 [12].

The second was a manga based on the anime *Maria-sama ga Miteru* (マリア様がみてる, "Maria Watches Over Us"). This work was based on a shōjo novel, a coming-of-age ensemble drama depicting the strong bonds between girls attending the high school division of a former aristocratic girls' school.

Arawi drew a four-panel manga titled *Shimako-san no Nayami* (志摩子さんの悩み, "Shimako's Worries"), starring one of the main characters, Shimako Tōdō, based on this anime [13]. This manga was published in the dōjinshi manga magazine *Chikuwabu*, issued by Daioki's circle, Dioxin, and was distributed at Comiket 67.

Novels, Calendars, and Other Works

Other creations include novels published on Himarayairuka. Although they are all short pieces, several stories, including "John Mark Ware," were later re-posted on his blog and republished in books. Although they do not have a strong presence among Arawi's creative works, it can be inferred that he had favorite pieces of writing among them.

Other creations include the package illustration for the matchbox "Roman Match" produced in December 2004, the calendar "05 Life" (05 生活), and the unpublished manga *Obake Poi!* (おばけポイッ！, "Ghost Toss!").

As listed above, Arawi was involved in a wide variety of creative activities other than self-produced manga. It is clear that he was passionate about all forms of creation, not just manga.

However, as will be detailed in "IV," from 2005 onward, he narrowed his creative activities to manga only in earnest to pursue a professional manga artist career. The major reasons for stopping the web radio broadcast, the natural dissolution of Kremlin no Tō, and the cancellation of the free paper *Mogura*'s publishing plan were all his determination to focus entirely on drawing manga.

The fact that Arawi was able to achieve his goal of debuting as a professional manga artist was likely due, in no small part, to his focusing his overflowing passion for creation solely on manga.

Web Radio (2002–2004) Broadcast Information

Web Radio *Tengoku Hōsō* (First Period)

- Broadcasted around April–July 2002 on Tengoku Cafe (a spin-off site of Azumanga Nanto ka).

Web Radio *Himaraya Nights*

- Time unknown (November 2002?): "Himaraya Nights (First Time)" broadcast on Himarayairuka.
- March 1, 2003: "Second Time Himaraya Nights" broadcast on Himarayairuka.
- April 5, 2003: "Himaraya Nights (Third Time)" broadcast on Himarayairuka.
- April 20, 2003: "Himaraya Nights Final Episode ~Sayonara Himaraya Nights~" broadcast on Himarayairuka.
- Using Lycos My Broadcaster

Web Radio *Tengoku Hōsō* (Second Period)

- October 24, 2003: "Streaming Tests" broadcast on Himarayairuka.
- February 8, 2004: "Tengoku Hōsō (First Time)" broadcast on Tengoku Cafe (newly established as a sister site to Himarayairuka).
- February 9, 2004: "Tengoku Hōsō (Second Time)" broadcast on Tengoku Cafe.
- Re-recorded on the CD *ugokazu* issued at Kansai Comitia 24 on May 30, 2004.

Music Works Publication/Issue Information

"Tobazu Tori" (Bird That Doesn’t Fly)

- Desktop Music
- Announced on Himarayairuka on October 23, 2003. Produced with the composition software ACID Pro.

"Nezu no Neko" (Sleepless Cat)

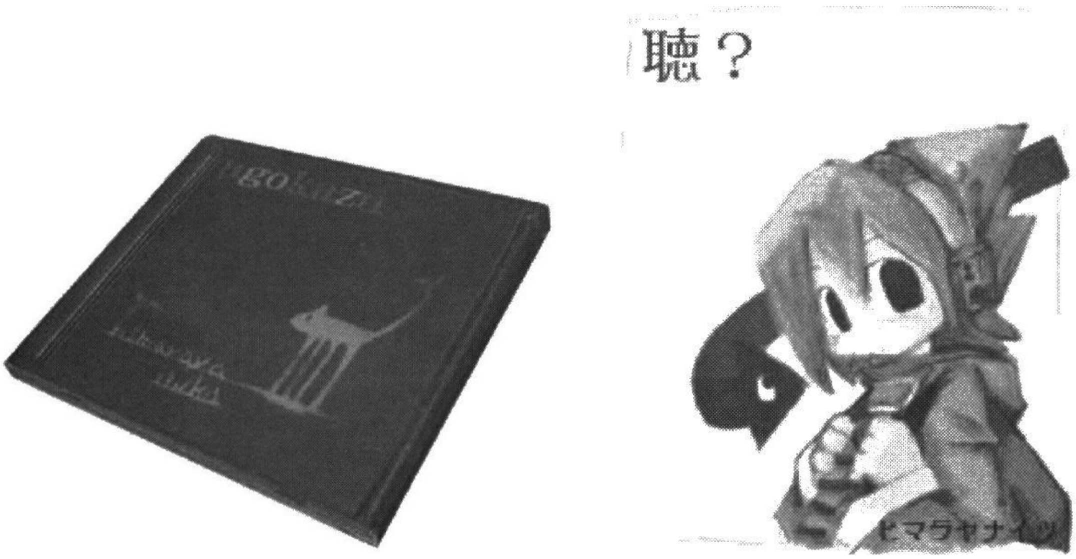
- Desktop Music
- Announced on Himarayairuka around May 2004.

ugokazu

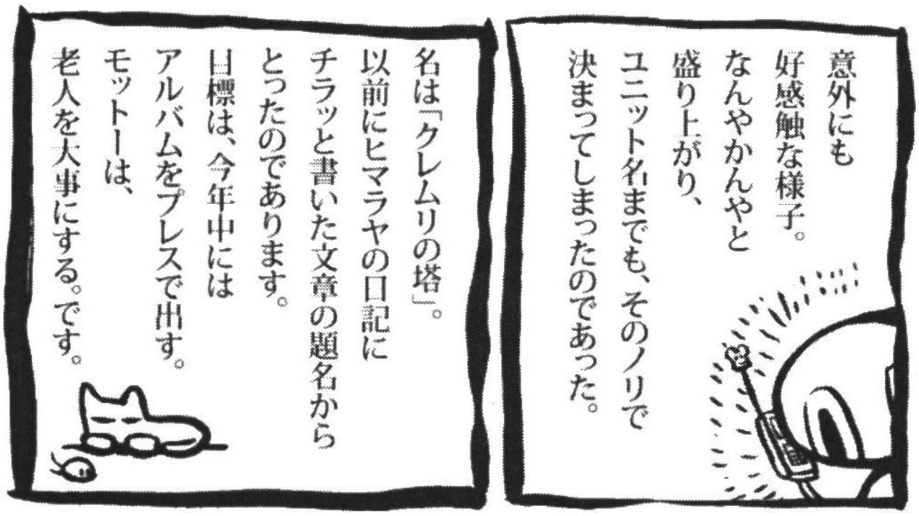
- CD-ROM
- Issued at Kansai Comitia 24 on May 30, 2004.
- Included music: "Tobazu Tori," "Nezu no Neko."
- Also included radio audio: "Tengoku Hōsō" (All broadcasted parts, including unreleased parts), and the liner notes.

"(Song Title Unknown)"

- Songs produced around June 2004 by the unit Kremlin no Tō, formed with Hiroshi (Arawi's relative, handle name Sentarō).


ugokazu
聴？
ヒマラヤナイツ

Left: *ugokazu* CD jacket photo.
Right: Promotional illustration for "Himaraya Nights" announced around March 2003.


意外にも好感触な様子。なんやかんやと盛り上がり、ユニット名までも、そのノリで決まってしまったのであった。
名は「クレムリの塔」。以前にヒマラヤの日記にチラッと書いた文章の題名からとったのであります。目標は、今年中にはアルバムをプレスで出す。モットーは、老人を大事にする。です。

From *Helvetica Standard* "29": Depicts the formation of Kremlin no Tō with his relative Hiroshi (handle name: "Sentarō").

Free Paper *Mogura Vol.0* Issue Information

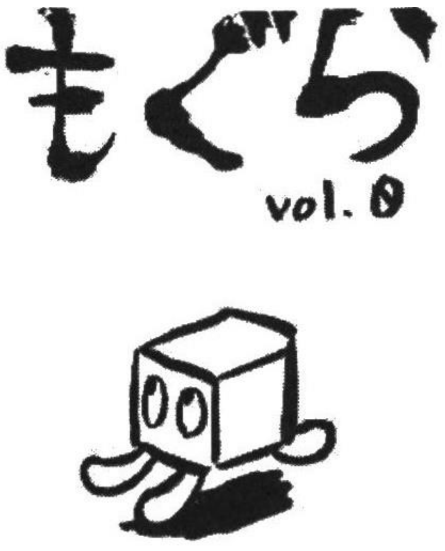
- Issued on August 16, 2004, and distributed at Comitia 69 on the 29th (Circle Space Y32a).
- Distributed along with the self-produced manga *Homare*.
- Byline: Arai Keiichi. Co-authored with Takeo Maeda.
- Free paper, B7 size, 8 pages total (including front and back covers).
- Arawi's pages: "Cover," "Introduction," "Seishun Game wa Shinu made!! Dai 1-kai 'Super Monkey no Daibōken'" (Youth Games Until Death!! Vol. 1 'Super Monkey's Great Adventure'), "Afterword," "Arai and Maeda's Top 3 Recent Interests."
- Maeda's pages: "Hoero! Eiga!!! Dai 1-kai 'Shinkansen Daibakuha (75 Tōei)'" (Roar! Movies!!! Vol. 1 'The Bullet Train (1975 Toei)'), "Arai and Maeda's Top 3 Recent Interests," "On the Inauguration of Mogura," "Back Cover."

Free Paper *Shouwa. Ichi* Issue Information

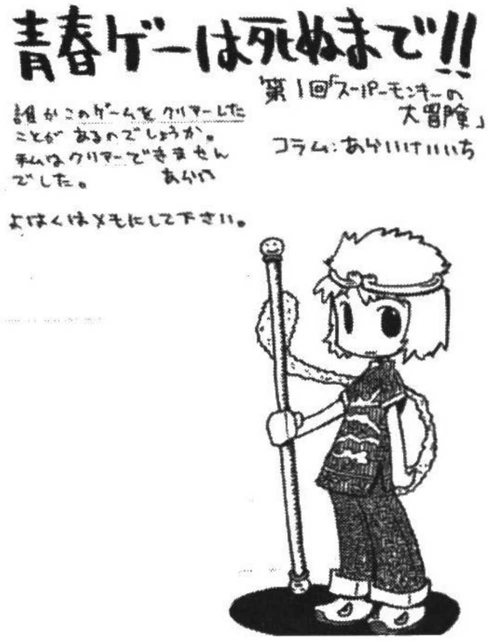
- Issued at Comitia 70 on November 21, 2004 (Circle Space F016).
- Distributed along with the manga *Milestone*. Byline: Arawi Keiichi.
- 2 pages main text, 1 page cover illustration, 1 page back cover illustration.
- Free paper, A5 size.

Content:

- "shouwa. free magazine" - A story about being deeply moved by Shūji Terayama's final words and thinking it was "somehow good."
- "freedom one daruma°" - A story about finding the shape of folk craft, especially the Daruma doll, to be "somehow good."
- "freedom two tekeretsunopa." - A story about "somehow liking" the sound of the spell "tekeretsunopa" from the rakugo (comic storytelling) story "Shinigami."



Mogura Vol.0 cover.



青春ゲーは死ぬまで!!

第1回「スーパーモンキーの大冒険」

コラム：あかいけいいち

誰かこのゲームをクリアーしたことがあるのでしょうか。
私はクリアーできませんでした。　あかい

よはくはメモにして下さい。

Mogura Vol.0 column "Seishun Gē-wa Shinu made!!" (青春ゲーは死ぬまで!!, "Youth Games Until Death!!").

shouwa1-1.psd

shouwa。
himarayairuka free magazine
2004年11月21日壱号発行

壱

Shouwa. Ichi cover.

Guest Manga Contributed to Collaborative Dōjinshi Information

"(Title Unconfirmed)"

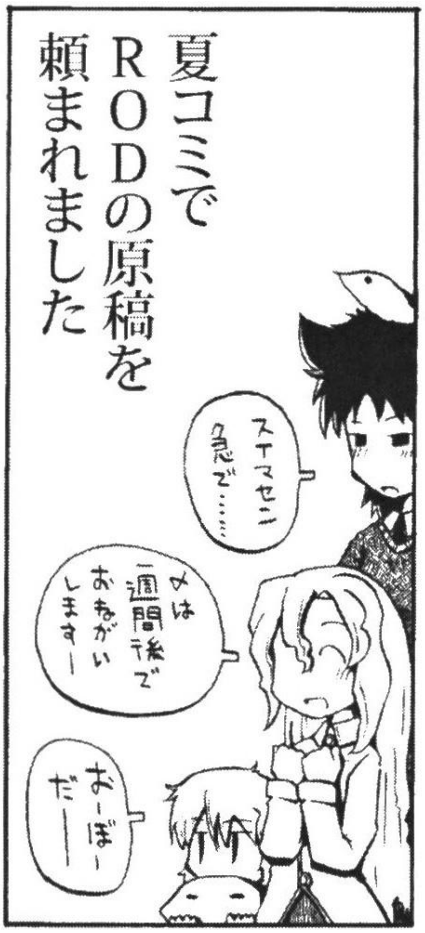
- Contributed to a dōjinshi manga magazine based on *R.O.D. -the TV-*. Byline: Arawi Keiichi?
- Publishing Circle: Pu-pāzu.
- 2 pages main text?
- Issued on August 14, 2004, on the third day of Comiket 66 (Circle Space East Bi-57a).

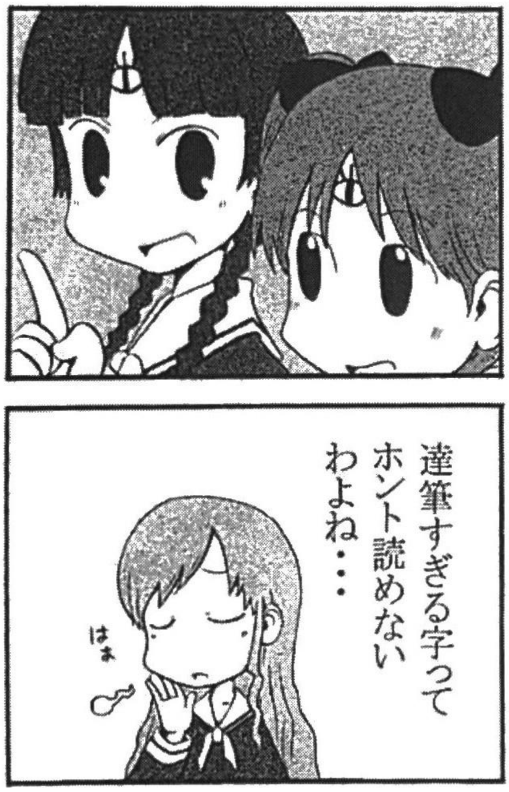
Shimako-san no Nayami (志摩子さんの悩み, Shimako's Worries)

- Contributed under the name Keiichi Arawi to the dōjinshi manga magazine *Chikuwabu*, based on *Maria-sama ga Miteru*.
- Publishing Circle: Dioxin (Organizer: Daioki [14]).
- 1 page main text.
- Issued on December 29, 2004, on the first day of Comiket 67 (Circle Space West Me-39b).

"(Title Unconfirmed)"

- Contributed to a dōjinshi manga magazine published by volunteers at Shinkōsha, where Arawi worked.
- Unknown number of main text pages.
- 1 page main text.
- Distributed at Sunshine Creation/Comic Creation around 2003–2004?


夏コミでRODの原稿を頼まれました
スイマセン急で……
〆は一週間後でおねがいしますー
おーぼーだーー


達筆すぎる字ってホント読めないわよね・・・
はぁ

Left: From *Helvetica Standard* "41": Depicts the three main characters of *R.O.D. -the TV-*, the "Three Sisters Detective Agency": Anita King, Maggie Mui, and Michelle Cheung.
Right: From *Chikuwabu*'s *Shimako-san no Nayami*: Features the three main characters of *Maria-sama ga Miteru*: Shimako Tōdō, Yumi Fukuzawa, and Yoshino Shimazu.

Novel Works Publication Information

Shinkan (新刊, "New Book")

- Published on Himarayairuka on July 24, 2003.
- Revised and re-posted on the kumomadori blog on October 1, 2007.
- Opening line: "I started an act of enduring not reading manga I'm currently following a while ago. It's a living hell for me, a manga lover, and especially a magazine lover. [...]"

Gogen (語源, "Etymology")

- Published on Himarayairuka on July 30, 2003.
- Re-posted on the kumomadori blog on October 1, 2007.
- Opening line: "In Nuri Country. Nuri III was troubled. By the fact that his nose was getting sharper every day. With this sharpness, he was the people's good laughingstock. 'This will completely destroy my dignity as king.' This was Nuri III's recent catchphrase. [...]"

Na wa Kremlin no Tō (名はクレムリの塔, "The Name is Tower of the Kremlin")

- Published on Himarayairuka on August 7, 2003.
- Opening line: "A tower under construction. The name is 'Kremlin.' Kremlin means milk shop. The Kremlin Tower was perfect from design to everything. Everything that was drawn in the head could be expressed in this tower. The creator was excited. [...]"

John Mark Ware (ジョン・マック・ウェアー)

- Published on Himarayairuka on November 10–11, 2003.
- Re-posted on the kumomadori blog on November 4, 2007.
- Re-posted in the essay book Kioku-seki, issued at Comitia 92 on May 4, 2010.
- Re-posted in Helvetica Standard Italic in November 2014, retitled *Gather 'round my friend, John Mark Ware*.
- Opening line: "John Mark Ware is a person that I thought up, but still, he sometimes says the most amazing things 'The key to unwavering happiness might just be to keep walking forward even on the most agonizing of days' [...]"

"(Untitled)"

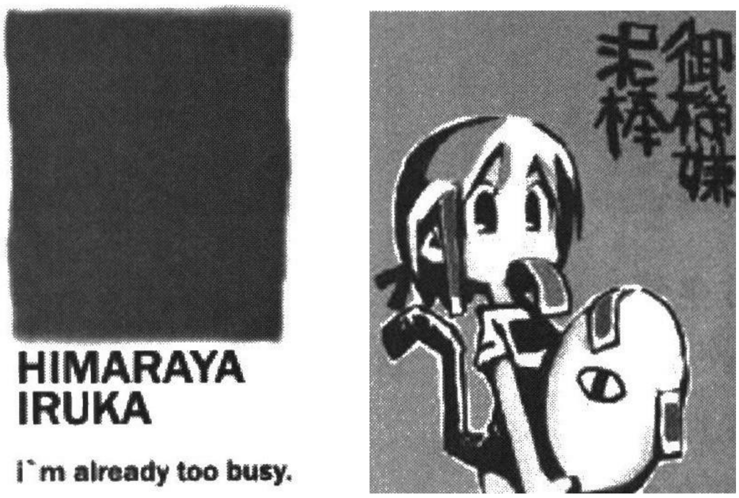
- Published on Himarayairuka on December 5, 2003.
- Revised and re-posted on the kumomadori blog on September 19, 2012.
- Re-posted in the essay book Kioku-seki, issued at Comitia 92 on May 4, 2010.

- Opening line: "'We are changing little by little in unchanging days. Well, we're aiming for unchanging days while continuing to change, though.' The man lit a cigarette and took a deep puff. [...]"

Matchbox "Himarayairuka Roman Match" Production Information

- Publicly released on Himarayairuka around December 10, 2004.
- Produced by Takuya Mitomi based on Arawi's illustration *Gokigen Dorobō* (Mood Thief).

Physical photo of "Roman Match."



Left: Sticker announced in 2003. The red paper pasted in the illustration of *Gokigen Dorobō* (Mood Thief) was based on Sticker, which features a red concept design. Right: *Gokigen Dorobō* announced in 2003.

Calendar "Himarayairuka First Half Calendar: 05 Life" Issue Information

- Consignment distributed along with *Chikuwabu* on December 29, 2004, on the first day of Comiket 67.
- A handmade calendar for January to June, with maxims and illustrations newly drawn for every half-month (12 total).
- Many of the illustrations were re-posted in the compiled volume of *Helvetica Standard*; the maxims were not included.
- Mail order conducted on Himarayairuka in early January 2005.
- From the cover illustration of "First Half Calendar: 05 Life" (上半期カレンダー 05 生活): An illustration of the two girls who appear in *Helvetica Standard* "66"–"68" and "70," Professor (later the Hakase in *Nichijou*) and Shinonome C-Gengo.

Maxim/Illustration Details:

"Toriaezu, Egao de Norikiru. Ichigatsu Zenhan." (とりあえず、笑顔でのりきる。一月前半, "For now, get through it with a smile. First Half of January.")

- Illustration: A woman in a furisode (long-sleeved kimono) with a carefree smile.

"Ichigatsu Kōhan wa, Neko ni Sutaba." (一月後半は、猫にスタバ。, "The second half of January, Starbucks for the cat.")

- Illustration: A white cat with a bell on its tail lapping up milk from a saucer.
- Re-posted on page 69 of the *Helvetica Standard* compiled volume.

"Yoku Wakaranai Game wo Omoitsuku Nigatsu Zenhan." (よくわからないゲームを思いつく 二月前半, "Coming up with a game you don't understand. First Half of February.")

- Illustration: A kokeshi-like object.

"Mirumiru datte, Tobikoeru. Nigatsu Kōhan." (ミルミルだって、飛び越える。二月後半, "Even Mirumiru, jump over it. Second Half of February.")

- Illustration: A girl wearing a one-eyed printed dress.
- Re-posted on page 11 of the *Helvetica Standard* compiled volume.

"Sangatsu Zenhan no Bungaku [15]**."** (三月前半の文学, "Literature of the First Half of March.")

- Illustration: A book with "Tobazu Tori" printed on the cover.
- Re-posted on page 23 of the *Helvetica Standard* compiled volume.

"Uchū Mame o Taberu. Sangatsu Kōhan." (宇宙豆を食べる。三月後半, "Eating Space Beans. Second Half of March.")

- Illustration: A girl picking up floating beans one by one with chopsticks.
- Re-posted on page 83 of the *Helvetica Standard* compiled volume.

"Shizen ni Ganbaru. Shigatsu Zenhan." (自然にがんばる。四月前半, "Naturally do your best. First Half of April.")

- Illustration: A young man floating while inflating a snot bubble.
- Re-posted on page 71 of the *Helvetica Standard* compiled volume.

"Shigatsu Kōhan no Rhapsody." (四月後半のラプソディー, "Rhapsody of the Second Half of April.")

- Illustration: A woman with her eyes closed and headphones floating in the air [16].
- Re-posted on page 65 of the *Helvetica Standard* compiled volume.

"Gogatsu no Zenhan." (五月の前半, "First Half of May.")

- Illustration: A spirit jumping out of a wooden fish (mokugyo) held by a girl, and a boy watching.
- Re-posted on page 79 of the *Helvetica Standard* compiled volume.

"Gogatsu Kōhan no Shiawase wa Kawaranai Itsumo no Nichijou." (五月後半の幸せは　変わらないいつもの日常, "The happiness of the second half of May is the unchanging, usual everyday.")

- Illustration: A conversation between Professor and Shinonome C-Gengo [17].

"ROKUGATUZENHAN." ("First Half of June.")

- Illustration: A triangle, a man whose head is a lamp, and a person wearing a pilot's cap [18].
- Re-posted on page 36 of the *Helvetica Standard* compiled volume.

"Kyū ni Ugokidasu Rokugatsu no Kōhan." (急に動き出す六月の後半。, "The second half of June that suddenly starts moving.")

- Illustration: A girl with a Sega Saturn game console on her lap.
- Re-posted on page 29 of the *Helvetica Standard* compiled volume.

Obake Poi! Writing Information

- 6 pages main text? (Unconfirmed due to manuscript loss). A work inspired by the cover illustration of *Shouwa. Ichi* [19].
- Written between December 2004 and 2005. Unpublished.
- Used as a manga sample in the "Manga Seihan-tte Nani?” (漫画製版って何？, "What is Manga Platemaking?") section of Shinkōsha’s website in 2006.

おばけポイッ!
あらあけいいち

Obake Poi! cover. The illustration from *Shouwa. Ichi* is reused (image is unclear).

---

[1]. Arawi discussed *Tengoku Hōsō* in an interview for this book: *"I remember Tengoku Cafe. We created plans based on radio and had fun with friends. We ran projects like the 'Gunpla Tournament,' where we'd build Gunpla using the image board set up on the website, and the 'Koshien Tournament,' where we'd choose two or three 'favorite high schools' from the Koshien tournament and run our own group tournament."*

[2]. In an interview for this book, Arawi expressed a desire to introduce 10 memorable songs that he was listening to at turning points in his life. This statement conveys his continued interest in engaging in music DJ-style activities. *"I'm thinking that someday I'd like to do a project where I introduce my favorite songs along with my life story. The image is a mix of Ordinary Music, which Keiichi Sogabe and Hideki Kaji used to do, and the NHK-FM special program (The Tokoton ○○ broadcast on August 8, 2012) that Kenji Ōtsuki used to appear on."*

[3]. *Tengoku Hōsō* was distributed on July 21, 2007, with a link directing listeners from the kumomadori blog.

[4]. The host sites for kumomadori Radio included Netora-ji (an internet radio broadcasting service provided by FC2), Ustream and Cavetube (a video-sharing service that shut down in 2022), and YouTube.

[5]. Kremlin no Tō was derived from the short story "Na wa Kremlin no Tō" published on Himarayairuka on August 7, 2003.

[6]. See the interview for this book: *"I did my composition activities with music production software given to me by my relative, Hiroshi. I added my own bass to it and created my own raps and techno-like songs. During this time, Hiroshi's music, which mashed up Famicom sound sources with DTM, was very cool, so I wanted to compose something with DTM myself. The music unit we later formed was 'Kremlin no Tō.' I remember creating songs that combined my own bass sounds with DTM and recordings of bird sounds, crowds, and water sounds. However, since we both became busy with work, we only managed a few songs before naturally disbanding."*

[7]. See the interview for this book: *"Since Mogura Vol.0 turned out well, I started thinking I wanted to publish a free paper regularly. Ultimately, I had the ambition of getting it stocked at the local Tsutaya. Free papers published by indie creators were vibrant back then, so I wanted to do it too."*

[8]. Maeda appears as "Maeda-kun" in *Helvetica Standard* "10," "24," and "60."

[9]. See *Helvetica Standard* "52" and "69."

[10]. Strictly speaking, there is information that he contributed a third manuscript to a dōjinshi besides the two introduced in the main text. Arawi recalls that while he was at Shinkōsha, he contributed to a collaborative dōjinshi created by employees and distributed it at Sunshine Creation/Comic Creation. However, the manuscript for this work is lost, and the details remain unknown. See the interview for this book.

[11]. See *Helvetica Standard* "41."

[12]. The dōjinshi manga magazine for *R.O.D. -the TV-* is lost, and the detailed content cannot be confirmed. However, the interview for this book revealed that he contributed a total of two pages of manuscript, one of which was about the carrier pigeon John Woo that appears in the story.

[13]. *Shimako-san no Nayami* was a comical four-panel manga in which Shimako Tōdō, walking down the street, worries, "I wonder how you become a Living National Treasure..." and "You really can't read calligraphy that's too artistic...," while the protagonist Yumi Fukuzawa (who has a scribble of an eye on her forehead) and her friend Yoshino Shimazu walk by. The adjacent illustration space showed her senior, Sachiko Ogasawara, lamenting, "Virgin Mary, Popolon has vanished from the town."

[14]. Daioki apparently did not handle the on-site distribution of Chikuwabu himself, entrusting it to a separate circle, "Umi no Sachi Teishoku" (海の幸定食, "Seafood Set Meal"). Umi no Sachi Teishoku was the dōjinshi manga circle of the manga artist Kaki Fly, with whom Daioki was friends. Although Kaki Fly and Arawi did not have direct interaction, both share the strange coincidence that their representative works (*K-On!* and *Nichijou*) were adapted into anime by Kyoto Animation.

[15]. The caption following "Literature of the First Half of March" reads: "Hifumi Itō was born in Stockholm in 1914. He later studied painting in Stockholm. His self-published 'Excuse Me from that Window,' became a great sensation in Stockholm in 1948, and since then he has published pure literary works such as 'Bird That Doesn't Fly' and 'Sleepless Cat' in Stockholm." Also: "Actor Introduction: Shizuko Ōmuro was born in Stockholm in 1906. Since the mother tongue of the country where she was born was the Stockholm language, she naturally learned the Stockholm language."

[16]. In *Helvetica Standard Italic*, Arawi mentions that he uses the "second generation" of the MDR-2700 (Sony) headphones. The headphones depicted here are likely modeled after the "first generation" of the headphones Arawi used.

[17]. The conversation between Shinonome C-Gengo and the Professor was as follows: C-Gengo: "Professor, what should I write on this paper?" Professor: "Oh, just write 'TV Terakoya' [TV Temple School]."

[18]. The content of the conversation in the "First Half of June" section was different when it was first published in "05 Seikatsu" and when it was re-posted in the *Helvetica Standard* compiled volume. The original conversation was as follows: Pilot Hat Man: "Hey, are we really supposed to go this way in the second half of June?" Lamp Man: "Yes. We have proper navigation, too." Triangle: "300 KILOMETERS LEFT."

[19]. See the interview for this book.

IV. To a Professional Manga Artist

In 2005, Arawi, at the age of 27, dedicated himself to creating manuscripts to submit to publishers. He was prepared to abandon the path of a manga artist if he couldn't see the light of day by the end of that year.

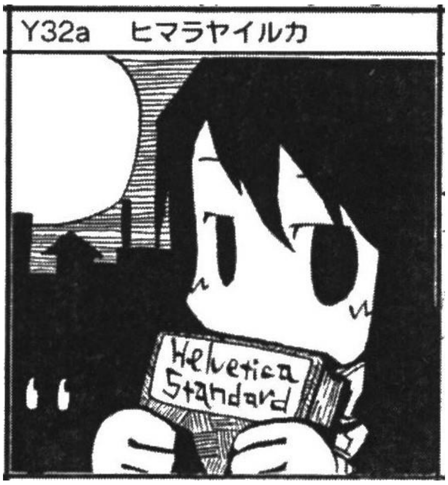
The road Arawi chose was steep, and he could not complete the journey with half-hearted resolve. However, the creative works he had built up until then provided the push he needed. And the following year, he achieved his long-cherished professional debut with *Kazemachi*.

This section will focus primarily on the self-produced manga he wrote up to 2006: *Homare*, the prototype for *Nichijou*; *Milestone*, a manga-michi manga detailing his state of mind while aspiring to be a professional manga artist; and *Hirake!*, a declaration of resolve after finally becoming a professional.

Run-up to Commercial Manga #1: *Homare*
(August 2004)

Homare (誉, "Honor"/"Praise")

- August 29, 2004, at Comitia 69 (Circle Space Y32a)
- Distributed together with the free paper *Mogura Vol.0*.
- Offset printing, B5 size, 30 pages total, Circle Name: Himarayairuka, Byline: Arawi Keiichi
- The *Homare* published at Comitia 80 (2007) is a different work with the same title.



Left: *Homare* Cover

Right: Himarayairuka Circle Cut published in *Tia's Magazine 69*

Individually Rich Trio of Girls

On August 29, 2004, Arawi exhibited at Comitia 69 and presented *Homare*. This work, the sixth manga presented at Comitia, had a major feature that set it apart from previous works: it was the direct prototype for the *Nichijou*.

Arawi had previously published gag manga such as *Shiawase no Kakudo*, *Machi*, *Futsū*, and *Helvetica Standard*. The comedic elements born from these works were utilized in his later manga. However, Homare, more than any before it, generated a multitude of elements that would be carried over, forming the basis for character designs, detailed background depictions, and the themes and structure of the story.

Homare was also characterized by being significantly easier to understand than his previous works. While maintaining the single-page conclusion format cultivated in *Helvetica Standard*, this work chose a setting based on reality. It avoided absurd developments or experimental direction, instead humorously depicting the girls' silly conversations.

This conversational drama of life-sized girls exchanging words was, paradoxically, a new departure. Arawi later commented on *Homare*, saying that it was "somehow a bit manga-ish." While describing a manga as "manga-ish" seems strange, he was likely referring to its quality as entertainment manga, indicating that it was more easily enjoyable than his previous works.

Let us first examine the characters of *Homare* to unravel the work. The core of this work was a trio of female middle school students.

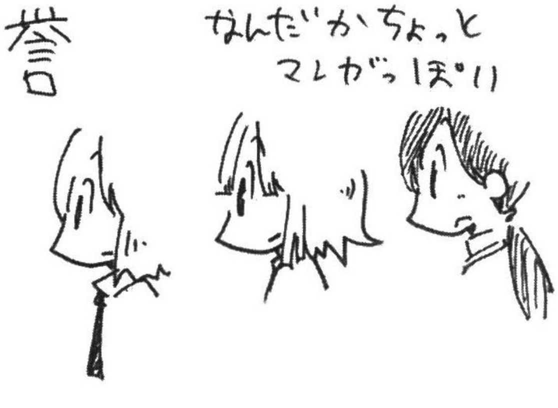

誉
なんだかちょっと
マンガっぽい

Illustration and comment presented at the *Nichijou* Volume. 9 release commemorative autograph session on January 26, 2014, when *Homare* was exhibited. From the left: Yana-chan, Tera-chan, Kotori-chan.

The first to appear is Yana-chan (やなちゃん), a second-year middle school student characterized by her short hair. Yana-chan is outspoken and has a cheerful personality that pulls those around her into her pace. She also has a good-natured charm, like trying to placate a friend she was late to meet by offering them a gift of something they like. She is the most assertive of the trio, but her petite stature is also striking.

Next is Kotori-chan (小鳥ちゃん), who is in the same year as Yana-chan. The tallest of the trio, Kotori-chan, with her long black hair tied in twin tails, has a gentle personality that contrasts with Yana-chan. However, she has her own unique world and is individualistic in a different sense from Yana-chan—for instance, being even later to a meeting than the already-late Yana-chan. She also had detailed settings such as liking Japanese folk crafts, not owning a mobile phone, not knowing much about video games, and having a rather unrefined sense of pajamas.

Finally comes Tera-chan (テラちゃん), a first-year middle school student and a junior to the other two. Tera-chan is dependable and academically excellent, the most sensible of the three, and is exasperated by her two freewheeling seniors. However, she seems to look up to them and always acts alongside them. On the other hand, she also possesses an unpredictable individuality, such as an extraordinary attachment to the Hudson Soft’s game *Momotaro Dentetsu* and owning limited-edition clothing coveted by T-shirt fanatics.

The crucial point to note about the girls in *Homare* is that all three are named. While having named characters might seem normal, it is an extremely rare feature for Arawi's Comitia manga. Looking back, most of his works, except for *Shiawase no Kakudo*, did not have names for the main characters.

There are two main reasons why characters in his past works lacked names. The first reason is Arawi's writing context at the time. Works like Jiko Tetsugaku Manga such as *Hakoniwa* and *Hane*, and Kūkūjakujaku Manga such as *Helvetica Standard* and *Kokoro*, were primarily focused on experimental expression and the depiction of a unique worldview. Consequently, there was little interest in developing character settings.

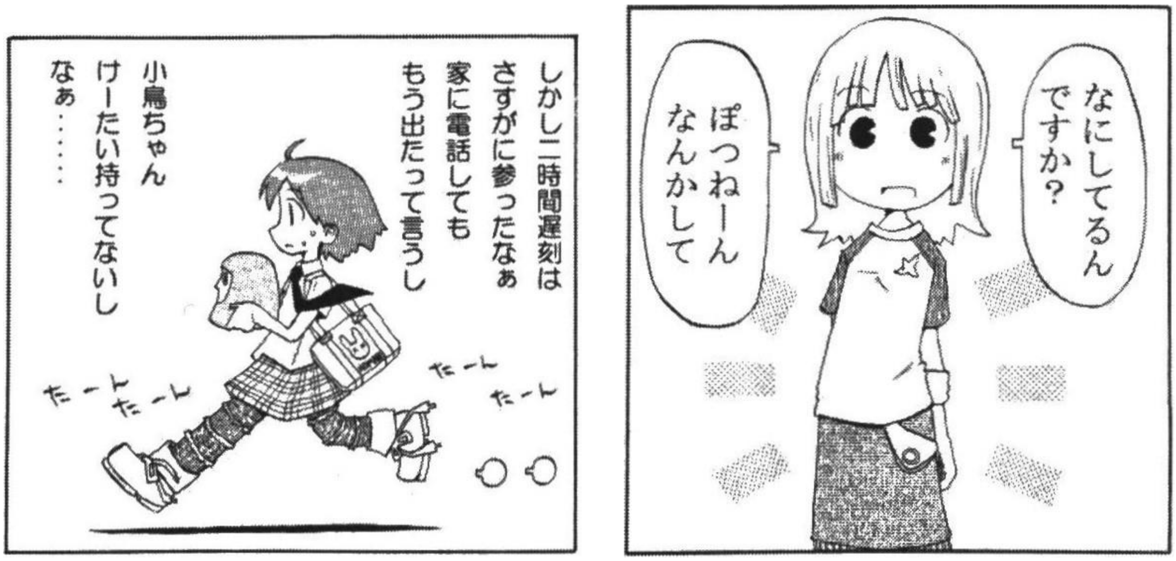
In contrast, *Homare*, being a conversational drama genre featuring middle school girls, required an exploration of the characters' personalities. As a result, the trio of girls were naturally given names. By being referred to as Yana-chan, Kotori-chan, and Tera-chan, their presence became all the more pronounced.

The second reason lies in the relationship between the main characters. As pointed out repeatedly, in works prior to *Homare*, Arawi used a duo of characters as the basic unit of the story. Since *Nantonaku*, the combination of a girl and a mascot character had become standard. Furthermore, the plot often featured a third party abruptly visiting the duo.

The characters in these previous works had a duo + other relationship, which was not one of equals. Consequently, the characters had no occasion to call each other by name, resulting in either no one having a name (*Hakoniwa*, *Kokoro*) or only the third party's name being revealed (Kiri-chan in *Hane*, Hamayū in *Machi*).

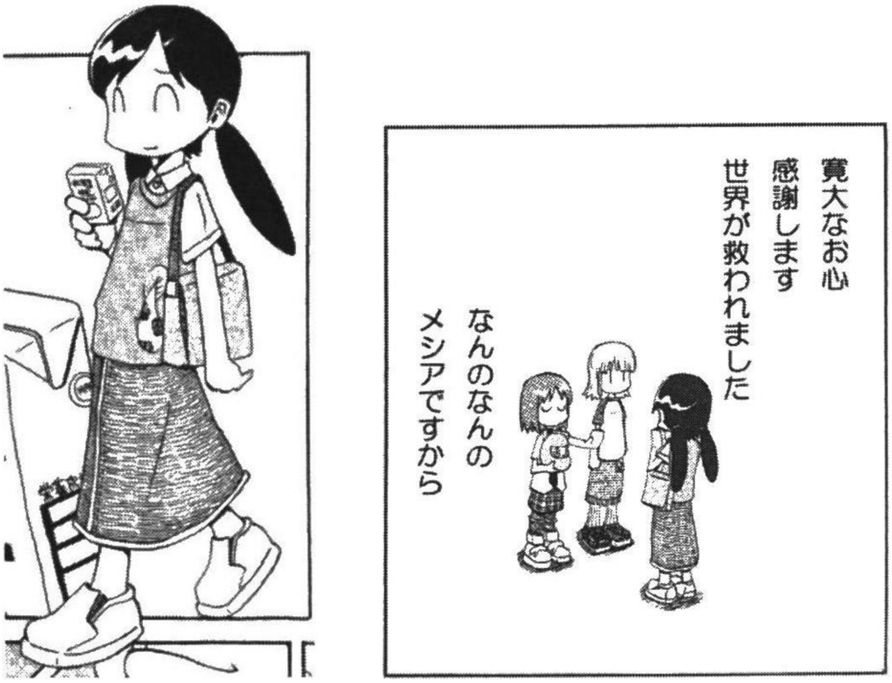
Conversely, the trio in *Homare* share a familiar relationship with one another. When they meet, they greet each other by name, and in their conversations, the topic of the absent third person naturally comes up. For example, when Yana-chan is called by Tera-chan, she casually responds, "Hey, Tera~! Buy me a juice~!" before bringing up Kotori-chan, who is not present. Meanwhile, Tera-chan refers to her two seniors respectfully as "Yana-san" and "Kotori-san."

The reason the trio in *Homare* was given names was their close, mutually concerned relationship. Through their exchanges of words, the girls highlighted each other's individuality and created an amusing conversational drama.


なにしてるんですか？
ぽつねーんなんかして
しかし二時間遅刻はさすがに参ったなぁ家に電話してももう出たって言うし
小鳥ちゃんけーたい持ってないしなぁ……
たーん
たーん
たーん
たーん

Left: From *Homare* page 5: Yana-chan.

Right: From *Homare* page 7: Tera-chan.

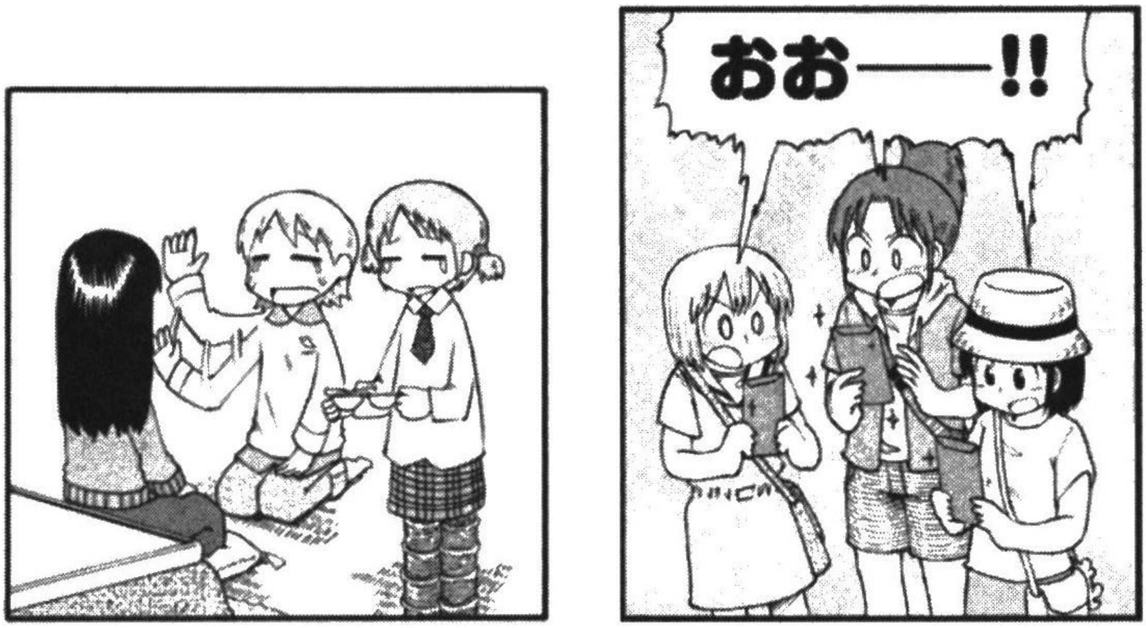

寛大なお心感謝します世界が救われました
なんのなんのメシアですから

Left: From *Homare* page 8: Kotori-chan.

Right: From *Homare* page 10.

The trio of girls in *Homare*—the cheerful and smooth-talking girl, the laid-back girl with her own unique worldview, and the sensible girl with an eccentric side—was a significant invention. Their character designs were directly incorporated into his commercial manga series. In *Nichijou*, they were succeeded by Yūko Aioi (Yukko), Mai Minakami, and Mio Naganohara, and in *CITY*, they were carried on as Midori Nagumo, Niikura, and Wako Izumi.

Arawi was conscious of this self-homage, and in *Nichijou* Volume 1, Chapter 9, and Volume 5, Chapter 76, he had the characters appear in costumes similar to the trio from *Homare*. The three main characters of *CITY* even matched the structure of two seniors and one junior, and the expression of their hair colors was consistent as well. It is clear that *Homare* had a major influence on the gag manga he would later create.



Left: From *Nichijou* Volume. 1, page 88: In Chapter 9, Mai Minakami, Yūko Aioi (Yukko), and Mio Nagahohara wear clothing similar to Kotori-chan, Tera-chan, and Yana-chan.
Right: From *CITY* Volume. 3, page 116: From the left: Niikura, Midori Nagumo, Wako Izumi.

The Easter Eggs Hidden in the Background

Unlike previous works, *Homare* possessed the clarity of entertainment manga. It was also characterized by the in-depth portrayal of the trio of main characters: Yana-chan, Kotori-chan, and Tera-chan.

Furthermore, this work exhibits another characteristic that continues into his later works: the detailed attention to background elements blossomed in earnest.

For example, there is no explicit mention of the date of the story in the main text. However, from the print on the newspaper that Yana-chan's mother is reading, it can be inferred that the events took place on July 30, 2004. Information was packed even into the subtle background descriptions.

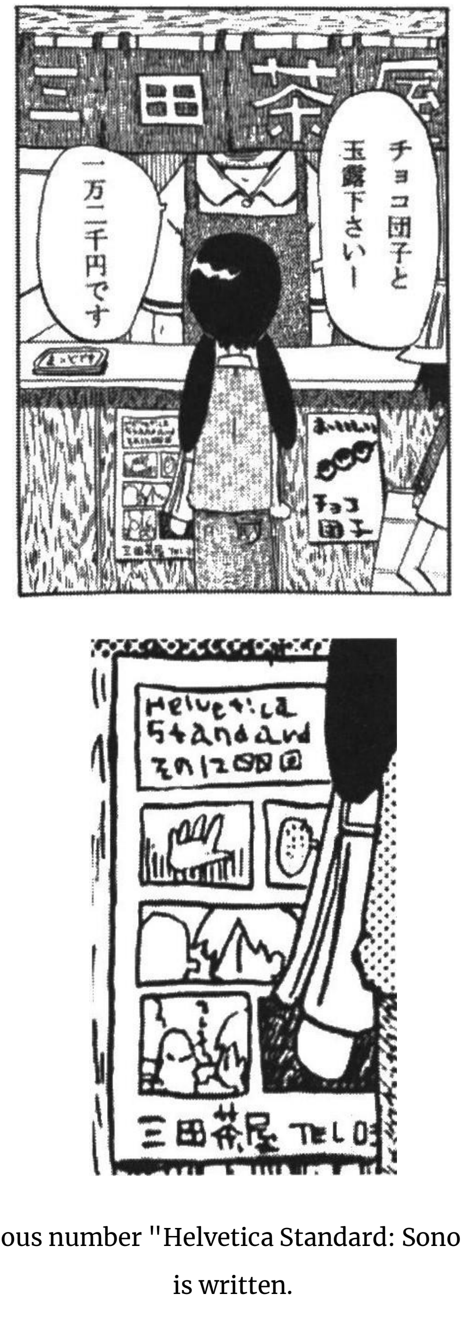
Additionally, the locations and shops in the background are all meticulously drawn. There is the Chūō Kōen (Central Park) where Yana-chan and her friends were meeting. The restaurant Denny's where the three were chatting. Mita Chaya, where Kotori-chan purchased Japanese sweets. And a Uniqlo retail store. The information spread across the background vividly portrayed the daily lives of the three girls.

Moreover, the finely drawn backgrounds do more than just supplement the main story. Items suggesting a connection to the worldview of other Arawi works are scattered throughout the background. Thus, *Homare* was also the catalyst for "Easter Eggs."

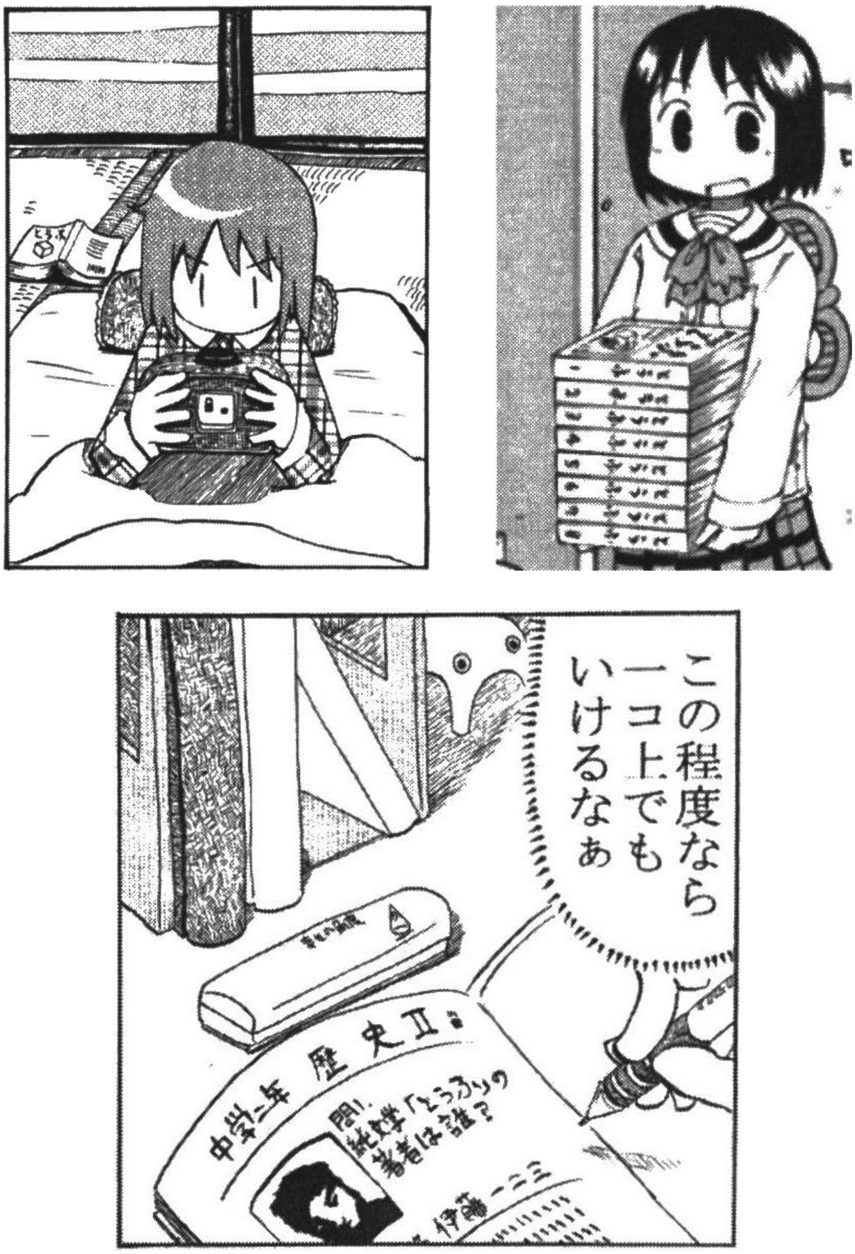
Let's list examples of the connections between works. For instance, *Helvetica Standard* "36" told a shocking story about a used game store where the buyback appraisal price for *Super Monkey Daibōken* was "negative 100 yen." Meanwhile, a banner hung on a building near the family restaurant Yana-chan and her friends entered read "Super Monkey Minus 100 Yen Market."

In "44," a door-to-door salesman for *Asa-tan Shinbun* (朝旦新聞) appeared; the newspaper in *Homare* was also the *Asa-tan Shinbun*. Furthermore, a sign was posted at the Japanese sweets shop Kotori-chan visited, which read, "Helvetica Standard '12000'".

Items suggesting a connection to the later Nichijou were also embedded in the background of *Homare*. The novel "T0fu", seen in Yana-chan's house and on the school homework Tera-chan solved, reappeared in *Nichijou* Volume 4, Chapters 56 and 69 [2]. Amashoku (a type of baked sweet) also appears in both Homare and *Nichijou* Volume 1, Chapter 13. As another link, Sankaku illustration from *Shiawase no Kakudo* was drawn on Tera-chan's pencil case.


三田茶屋
チョコ団子と玉露下さいー
一万二千円です
おいしい チョコ団子
Helvetica Standard その12000回
三田茶屋 TEL 0

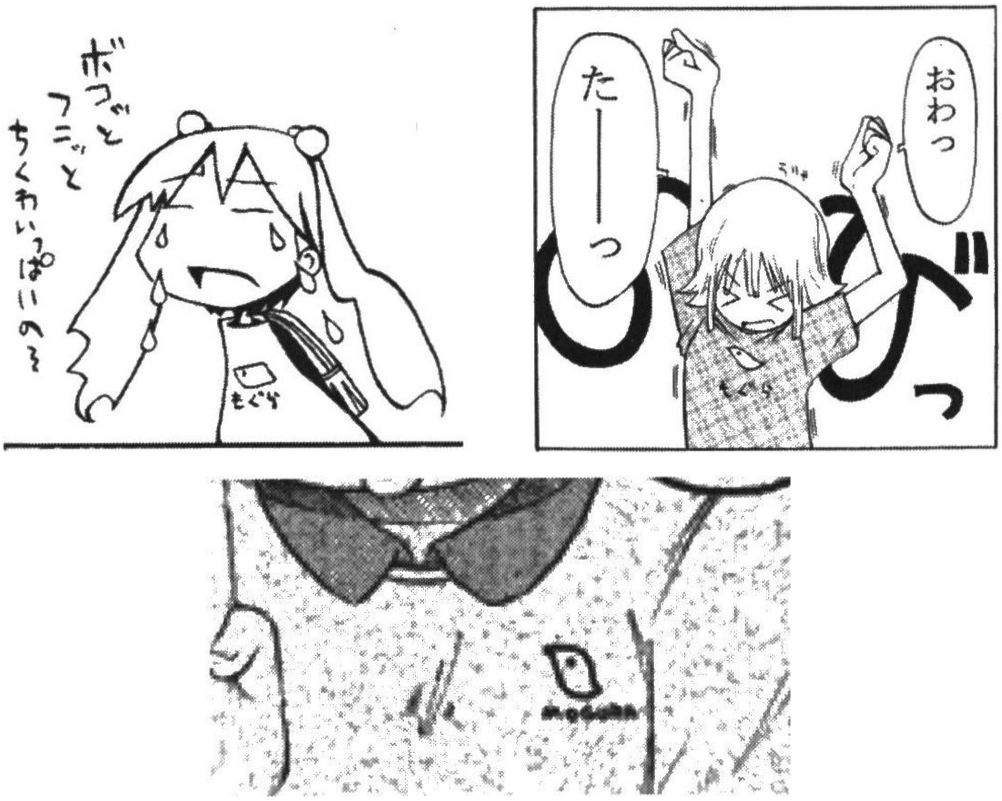
From *Homare* page 12: The outrageous number "Helvetica Standard: Sono 12000" (Helvetica Standard 12000) is written.


この程度なら一コ上でもいけるなぁ
中学二年 歴史Ⅱ
問1. 純文学「とうふ」の著者は誰？
伊藤一二三

Left: From *Homare* page 4: A book titled "Tofu" (とうふ) is visible behind Yana-chan.
Right: From *Nichijou* Volume 4, page 18: Nano Shinonome carrying the book "Tofu."
Bottom: From *Homare* page 15: The novelist Hifumi Itō (伊藤一二三), who wrote "Tofu" in the history question, appears, and Sankaku from *Shiawase no Kakudo* is drawn on the pencil case.

And one more item that stands out in the work is the "Mogura" brand T-shirt. Mogura originally referred to the free paper Mogura, co-produced with his colleague from Shinkōsha, Takeo Maeda. From this, Arawi focused on the sound of "Mogura" and created a new mascot character distinct from the mole mammal. He gave the name "Mogura" to a simple-lined, yellow, bird-like creature.

Mogura appears in a subtly twisted way—as a logo on the clothes worn by the characters. This clothing first appeared in *Helvetica Standard* "39" [3] and was then adopted as the clothing worn by Tera-chan in *Homare*. Subsequently, clothes bearing the Mogura brand name also appeared in *Nichijou* and *CITY* [4] [5].



Upper Left: From *Helvetica Standard* "39."

Upper Right: From *Homare*, page 16.

Bottom: From *Nichijou* Volume 5, page 84.

A key point regarding the *Homare* Easter eggs is that none of them are deeply involved with the main story. The items and characters that appear across multiple works are only placed in the side paths of the narrative. Therefore, readers can enjoy the story even if they don't notice the detail in the background.

In other words, *Homare* provides two ways to enjoy the work: reading the main story and reading to discover the playful attention to detail in the background. Arawi later reflected that he incorporated these minute expressions with the sentiment that he would be "happy if people who noticed the tricks would reread the work."

> ***I create them hoping that people who notice [the tricks] will reread the previous pages or the previous volumes. But, of course, it is a manga that can be read even without noticing such things, so I would be happy if people thought, "I gained a little something extra when I noticed it." Also, regarding these "notices" that appear in the manga, I try not to talk about them myself, as it would be uncouth to do so.***
> [From *Da Vinci*, April 2018 issue, "Next Time, He's Running Through the 'City'! *CITY* - Keiichi Arawi" (今度は“街”を駆けめぐる！『CITY』あらゐけいいち)]

This kind of direction, which subtly suggests connections to other works or different chapters through meticulously drawn items, was also carried over into his later commercial manga series.

Calling Ordinary Days "Homare"

Arawi put great care into the details of both the characters and the backgrounds when writing *Homare*. As a result, the work can be read not only by following the girls' conversational drama but also by searching for information hidden in the background.

Having looked at the characters and the background, we will now consider the theme of the work. Unlike Arawi's previous Comitia works, the story of *Homare* can be understood without confronting its theme. The main plot is fundamentally the girls' amusing interactions, and the author's thoughts, at least in a noticeable form, are not explicitly present.

However, the author's thinking can still be clearly discerned from this work. Therefore, we will first trace the plot of the story before delving into the theme embedded within it.

The narrative of *Homare* is divided into two parts: a front part and a back part. "Homare no Ichi" (ほまれのいち, "Praise: Part 1") depicts the process of the three—Yana-chan, Kotori-chan, and Tera-chan—gathering together, with the stories of Yana-chan's perspective and Kotori-chan's perspective unfolding alternately.

At the beginning of the story, Yana-chan, who overslept, is two hours late for her promise with Kotori-chan and rushes to the meeting spot. Meanwhile, Kotori-chan is even later, by more than two hours, and ends up forgetting the appointment altogether while playing with a black cat she saw on the street.

After a series of twists and turns, the two finally meet and take a break at a restaurant, joined by their junior, Tera-chan. Tera-chan is surprised by her two seniors' self-paced nature but learns that they had planned a study group to complete their summer homework together.

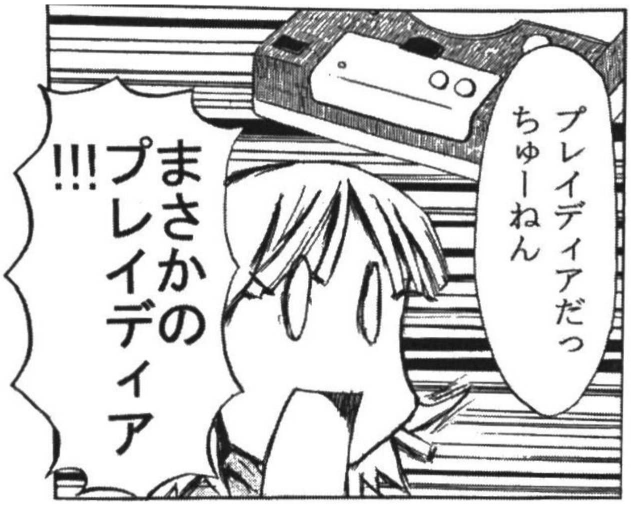
Yana-chan arranges to hold the study session another day and casually invites Tera-chan to join. However, Tera-chan reveals that she had finished all her homework on the very first day of summer vacation. The two seniors protest their junior's academic excellence, causing Tera-chan to be flustered. In "Homare no Ichi," the three girls' personalities are clearly revealed through their witty conversations and silly interactions. The narrative also intentionally provides the amusement of having the three, who were in separate locations at the start, eventually assemble in one spot. Although we will not delve into it here, this expression of multiple characters convening at the end of the story culminates in the later work, *CITY*.

"Homare no Ni" (ほまれのに, "Praise: Part 2"), the back part of the story, features the study session held at Yana-chan's house. However, when close friends gather, concentration is naturally short-lived. Sure enough, Yana-chan and Kotori-chan pick up calligraphy brushes and start drawing pictures.

Tera-chan admonishes her two seniors, but she is not without the desire to play with them. This time, Tera-chan suggests they play a video game against each other. As a fervent fan of *Momotaro Dentetsu*, Tera-chan brought all the past software, from the first installment to the latest series [7], just for this day.

However, they ultimately cannot play *Momotaro Dentetsu*. Yana-chan's home only possesses a rare game console, the Playdia, released by Bandai, which no modern middle school girl would typically own, making it impossible to play *Momotaro Dentetsu*.

"Homare no Ni" mixed the lively conversation of the girls with the gag elements cultivated in *Helvetica Standard*. In particular, the humor of introducing obscure, old video game topics into the story is a reflection of his experience with *Helvetica Standard*. Furthermore, the gag of deliberately including old items is also seen in the depiction of Kotori-chan's sleepwear, which is printed with the Yomiuri Giants' old logo, the "boy on a bat."

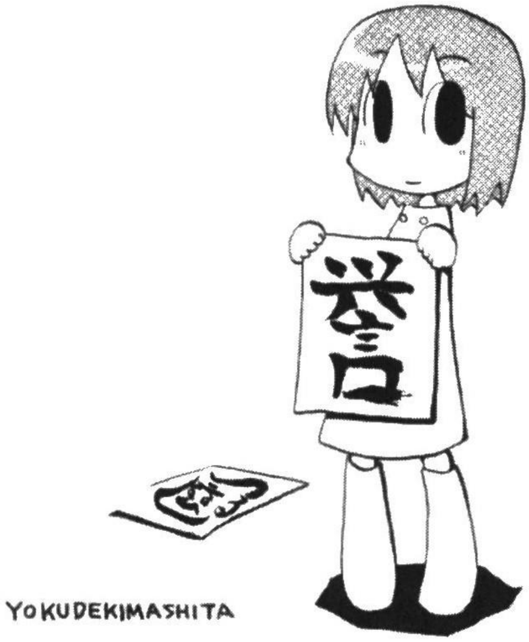

プレイディアだっちゅーねん
まさかのプレイディア!!!

From *Homare*, page 17: Tera-chan is surprised that the game console Yana-chan is holding is a Playdia.

The key to deciphering the theme of this work is hidden in the illustration placed after the story ends. The illustration features Yana-chan holding up the single kanji character "誉" (Homare, "Praise/Honor") that she wrote on a half-sheet of paper. She had practiced writing this auspicious character with a calligraphy brush while drawing pictures during the study session/sleepover.

What is noteworthy here is the single phrase "Yokudekimashita" (よくできました, "Well Done") written beside the illustration. On the surface, this phrase seems to be praising the skillful calligraphy of Yana-chan's character. However, let us take a deeper interpretation and consider this phrase as praising "the entire story of Homare." When viewed this way, Arawi's underlying philosophy emerges.

Many people living in the modern world lead unchanging daily lives. It may even be that they more often feel bored or dissatisfied with their daily routine. If so, the ability to extract vibrant enjoyment from the ordinary, everyday life is, in itself, deserving of applause. The trio of girls, who spent a non-special day amusingly through silly interactions with friends, were, despite appearing ordinary, actually praiseworthy beings.



From *Homare*, page 24: Yana-chan shows the character "誉" written with a brush.

Arawi once expressed in *Shiawase no Kakudo* that the definition of happiness varies greatly from person to person. That is why he came to think that instead of seeking happiness, he wanted to lower the baseline for experiencing happiness and enjoy the ordinary days more than the average person.

> ***Everyone's "normal" is different,But every single person has a "normal,"So, ultimately, how do we solve self-stagnation? We need to cause a self-revolution. Something like thatI think, or maybe I don't think.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "Clapback Reply" (拍手返信), September 1, 2008]

In that sense, Yana-chan and her friends, who can "solve self-stagnation" within their daily lives, were an ideal image. Arawi likely wanted to tell the girls who were enjoying their daily lives in a world that was neither absurd nor dramatic, "Well Done." Consequently, he titled the work "Homare" and praised the entire story within it.

This attitude of affirming the girls who enjoy their daily lives is the theme of this work. And the construction of a world where characters enjoy these ordinary times more than the average person, and which deems that enjoyment good, was also carried over into his commercial serialized works from *Nichijou* onward [8].

May Love Be Shared With All People, Again

In addition to the characters, background, and theme that have been analyzed so far, *Homare* had one more striking feature: a story about two young men, completely unrelated to the trio of girls, was suddenly inserted into the narrative.

This kind of narrative structure, where the story branches out from the main plot, was also incorporated into his commercial serialized works. *Nichijou* and *CITY* are established as ensemble dramas featuring a large cast of characters.

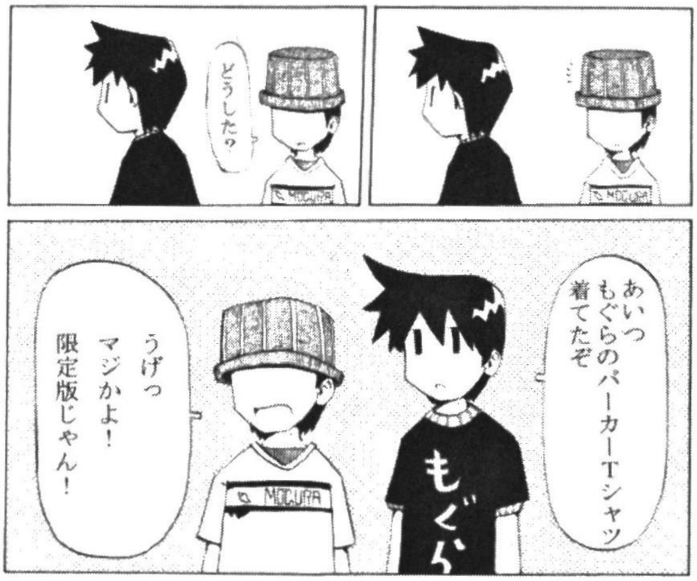
Here, we will examine the scene where the two young men are newly introduced, consider why their story was inserted, and what meaning it carries.

The young men first appear at the beginning of "Homare no Ni." In this scene, the pair of young men pass by Tera-chan as she heads to the study session/sleepover.

Tera-chan pays no mind to the two, but they are wide-eyed with surprise. This is because the T-shirt hoodie Tera-chan is wearing is the sought-after Mogura brand. The two young men, who also wear the Mogura brand, immediately recognize the value of the girl's clothing and are greatly impressed.

What is important here is that even though they are interested in Tera-chan's clothing, they do not call out to her. The young men were complete outsiders who did not interact with the story of the three girls.

Furthermore, the two groups have no contact after this. When the young men appear next, they are waiting in a long queue outside a retail store to buy the summer-limited edition of the Mogura T-shirt. They are living their lives completely unrelated to the trio who are enjoying their study session/sleepover at Yana-chan's house. The two young men and Tera-chan merely happened to pass each other on the street.


どうした?
MOGURA
あいつ
もぐらのパーカーTシャツ
着てたぞ
うげっ
マジかよ!
限定版じゃん!
もぐら

From *Homare*, page 14: The two young men are captivated by the limited-edition Mogura hoodie T-shirt worn by Tera-chan.

To understand this narrative structure of placing young men unrelated to the trio of girls, the previous work, *Machi*, serves as a reference.

Recalling *Machi*, the exchange between the young man and the grim reaper was depicted as an interlude unrelated to the main plot, which was the love story between the girl and the robot. The young man, who did not know his own name, acquired the name Hamayū through his conversation with the grim reaper. The young man deeply liked the name and referred to himself as Hamayū afterward. This interlude suggested the happiness of a lonely young man, who had never been called by name, being acknowledged by another.

Arawi explicitly stated that the theme of *Machi* was benevolence. During this period of drawing Jiko Tetsugaku Manga, he held the belief that love should be shared with all others, which was the ultimate conclusion of contemplating others.

Inserting the Hamayū interlude into *Machi* was likely to incorporate this theme of benevolence. Arawi sought to express the idea of benevolence by depicting both the main character and a complete outsider as equally finding happiness. As a result, he depicted not only the protagonist girl's wish coming true but also the scene where a helping hand is extended to the young man who had no connections with anyone.

The same intention is thought to be present in *Homare*. In other words, the decision to depict the two young men, T-shirt enthusiasts, separately from the main girl characters, was a result of the desire to express the theme of benevolence once again.

However, the young men in *Homare* achieve happiness in a different way than Hamayū. While Hamayū was saved by the grim reaper's intervention, no particular stroke of luck befalls the two young men. They gain a sense of fulfillment through their simple hobby of chasing the Mogura brand T-shirts.

Because the young men are individuals who "can find happiness in their ordinary days," they are naturally happy even without anything special happening. This is the same way Yana-chan and her friends find satisfaction in their daily interactions. *Homare* was a story where both the main plot of the three girls and the side story of the two young men individually enjoyed their days to the fullest.

A world where both the main characters and the non-protagonist figures can fully enjoy themselves was Arawi's ideal. The narrative structure, where the story branches off mid-plot, and the depiction of characters enjoying their everyday lives are thought to have been devices to express the benevolence theme.

But why did Arawi bring back the theme of benevolence, which he had already fully expressed in *Machi*, in *Homare*? Arawi mentioned in an interview for this book that it might be because he wanted "to rescue his past self."

> ***When I reflect on my manga, I realize that the theme has always been "benevolence," both now and in the past. When I think about why it is "benevolence," I sometimes feel that maybe it's "because I want to rescue my past self." Of course, I can't say that's the only reason, but I recalled my middle school days for the first time in a while and realized it was something unavoidable.*** [From an interview for this book]

As seen in "I. Early History," Arawi was submerged in loneliness during his middle school years. Although his days were not entirely dark—being inspired by members of the weightlifting club or immersing himself in his beloved manga and radio—he was certainly hurting from the loneliness in his heart.

Given this, the current work, which depicts characters, including middle school girls, enjoying their daily lives, takes on a meaning beyond just an amusing conversational drama. Benevolence is the philosophy that prays, "May love be shared with all people." For Arawi, the "all people" who are the object of benevolence included himself, specifically his past self, who was different from the person drawing the manga now.

The desire to rescue his middle school self. Driven by this thought, the artist created *Homare*, expressing the benevolence philosophy that brings happiness to both the girls and the young men.

The story of *Homare* does not depict Arawi's inner life. However, it can be interpreted as a manga that heals the loneliness he had constantly carried since adolescence. Like his other self-produced manga, it was a work born from the artist's existential motivation.

And the benevolence theme of this work was also passed on to his later commercial serialized manga. Ensemble dramas like *Nichijou* and *CITY*, where a large number of characters find happiness by enjoying their daily lives, would be created numerous times.

---

[1]. From the introduction page on the Himarayairuka, the illustration features a playful design where a man is holding the page number that was previously printed at the bottom of the manuscripts.

[2]. The author of the novel "Tofu," mentioned as Hifumi Itō, reappeared with a slightly altered name, Hifumi Daiku (大工一二三), as the author of the novel "In" (印, "Stamp") on the cover illustration of *Nichijou* Volume 1. However, the author of "Tofu" is introduced as "Charles L. Steiner, translated by Akira Seki" in the "Notebook 2012–2013" (手帖 2012〜2013) supplement of the May 2012 issue of *Monthly Shōnen Ace*, so the setting may have been changed.

[3]. *Helvetica Standard* "39" was an essay manga where Arawi's self-portrait, drawn as a girl, attempts to buy a figure of the four-dimensional monster Bullton from *Ultraman* but fails to communicate the name to the store clerk because she doesn't know it. The Mogura T-shirt was an irrelevant element in the story, shown merely as a subtle decoration. Incidentally, in the June 2015 issue of *Monthly Heroes*, Arawi published an illustration poster of Bullton and his *"Top 5 Favorite Monster Rankings": "[5th] Seabozu: A surprising rank-in from outside the range! Because I recently bought a Hagi-ware teacup. [4th] Alien Metron: Because he looks like a poisonous cod roe. [3rd] Gavadon (larval): Because he looks like a cross between a penguin and a silkworm. [2nd] Eleking: Because he looks like a banana. [1st] Bullton: Because he's lumpy and cool! That's all!"*

[4]. In *CITY* Volume 3, page 159, pants with the embroidery "mogura" appear.

[5]. In works after *Nichijou*, Mogura not only appears as a T-shirt design but also as an actual animal in the story. Furthermore, Mogura was adopted as the symbol on the spine of the collected volumes.

[6]. The black cat that Kotori-chan found on the street was wearing a shimenawa (braided straw rope) instead of a collar. A black cat in a distinctive outfit brings to mind Sakamoto, the black cat with a red scarf who appears later in *Nichijou*. Although the black cat in *Homare* does not speak human language like Sakamoto, it can be seen as a prototype for Sakamoto.

[7]. The latest *Momotaro Dentetsu* game at the time *Homare* was announced in August 2004 was *Momotaro Dentetsu 12: Nishi Nihon-hen* (Western Japan Edition). The work flipped the numbering "12," referring to the latest work as "Momotetsu 21."

[8]. Arawi once described people who can enjoy their ordinary time more than the average person as having a "low boiling point for happiness." For example, in a tweet posted on November 9, 2009, he said, "It would be convenient if I could freely manipulate my boiling point for happiness at any given moment." It is thought that Arawi, who aimed to be a person who could find amusement in anything, like the trio in *Homare*, was trying to become a person with a low "boiling point for happiness."

The term "boiling point for happiness" also appears in "Arama's Happiness Boiling Point" (あらまさんの幸せの沸点) included in *Helvetica Standard Italic*. This episode is about the office worker Arama-san who is repeatedly discouraged by minor failures during the day, but cheers up because the buri no teriyaki (yellowtail glazed in soy sauce) he made for dinner was delicious, deciding to "call everything even." Judging from the title, it is because Arama-san's boiling point for happiness is low that he can be immersed in a feeling of happiness despite a string of failures. Arama-san's nature, which is sensitive and has his heart swayed by small events every time, simultaneously cultivated the ability to find much happiness in his ordinary daily life.

Arama-san's appearance in this way seems to convey to the reader the idea that lowering the "boiling point for happiness" is the secret to living happily. Indeed, Arawi mentioned in a kumomadori Radio broadcast around the same time as this work (December 29, 2011) that he wanted "something to lower the boiling point for happiness."

Run-up to Commercial Manga #2: *Helvetica Standard* Late Period (August–December 2004)

First Appearance Information for Chapters 45–73:

- Helvetica Standard 45 - Around August–September 2004
- Helvetica Standard 46 - September 2004
- Helvetica Standard 47: Arawi ♡ Keiichi - September 2004
- Helvetica Standard 48 – Around September 18, 2009
- Helvetica Standard 49 - September 2004
- Helvetica Standard 50 - September 2004
  (Note: Remade in *Kazemachi*, published in the March 2006 issue of *Monthly Comic Flapper*; Remade in the self-produced manga *Nichijou*)
- Helvetica Standard!!! 51 - September 2004
- Helvetica Standard 52-dayo (52, you know) - Around September–October 2004
- Helvetica Standard 53 - Around September–October 2004
- Helvetica Standard 54 - Around September–October 2004
- Helvetica Standard 55 - Around October 10, 2004
- Helvetica Standard 56: Kuroneko no Sankaku (黒猫の三角, "Black Cat's Triangle") - Around October 18, 2004
- Helvetica Standard 57: Helvetica no Kakikata #1 (ヘルベチカの描き方①, "How to Draw Helvetica #1") - Around October 26, 2004
- Helvetica Standard 58: Shūmatsu no Hanashi (週末の話, "Weekend Story") - Around November 1, 2004
- Helvetica Standard 59 - November 2004
- Helvetica Standard 60 - November 2004
- Helvetica Standard 61: Comitia 70 no Ohanashi (コミティア 70 のおはなし, "The Story of Comitia 70") - November 2004
- Helvetica Standard 62 - November 2004
- Helvetica Standard Uruteku 63 (ウルテク 63, "Ul-Tech 63") - November 2004
- Helvetica Standard 64 - Around November 30, 2004
- Helvetica Standard 65: Install a " TONGARI corn" in a finger!!! no Maki (Install a " TONGARI corn" in a finger!!!の巻, Chapter of Install a "Tongari Corn" in a finger!!!)
  (Note: Remade in *Kazemachi*, published in the March 2006 issue of *Monthly Comic Flapper*; Remade in the commercial serialized version of *Helvetica Standard* "40 Sōshite Mata Asahi wa Noboru" [And So the Morning Sun Rises Again])

- Helvetica Standard 66: Nichijou - December 2004
- Helvetica Standard 67: Nichijou #2 - Around December 5, 2004
- Helvetica Standard 68: Nichijou #3 - December 2004
- Helvetica Standard 69 - Around December 10, 2004
- Helvetica Standard 70: Nichijou #4 - December 2004
- Helvetica Standard 71 - December 2004
- Helvetica Standard 72: Kōnyū (購入, "Purchase") - Around December 20, 2004
  (Note: Appears as an in-story work in *Nichijou* Volume 3, page 103)
- Helvetica Standard 73: from thank you for the music!! - December 21, 2008
  (Note: Released on the kumomadori blog, four years after the release of "72")

Self-Homage to Subsequent Works

In the section on Homare, we examined the elements that became the source for the later *Nichijou* and *CITY*: the trio of girls and the fine details in the background; the theme of celebrating people who enjoy their ordinary days; the ensemble drama structure where even non-protagonist characters have an active role; and the philosophy of benevolence, wishing for everyone to be happy. All were indispensable elements for Arawi when serializing his work in commercial manga magazines.

On the other hand, *Helvetica Standard*, which he had been writing for a long time, also became a foundation for his commercial serialization. He incorporated entire gag ideas from it into his later works.

The first instance of reusing *Helvetica Standard* was in his commercial debut work, *Kazemachi*. This manga, released in 2006, extracted the absurd and preposterous gags from Helvetica Standard and redrew them in a four-panel manga format (details will be covered in the sequel to this book). Consequently, multiple instances of reusing previously written stories can be found.

For example, the beginning of the first chapter of *Kazemachi* was based on *Helvetica Standard* "33," where the person you were waiting to meet arrives in Anpanman's car from *Soreike! Anpanman*. Other self-homages can be confirmed from: "28," where a boy who sees a girl wearing rabbit ears (resembling bread crusts) gets a craving for bread crusts; "32," where an unknown young girl brings up the topic of the 60th Yokozuna, Futabakuro; "44," where a girl dressed in classical Lolita fashion [1] comes to sell newspapers; and "3," where a stabbing victim leaves a drawing of Takahashi Meijin as a dying message.

Additionally, "50," where a girl finds a Shogi piece mixed into her food, was not only used in *Kazemachi* but also incorporated into *Nichijou* Volume 2, "Nichijou no Prototype 2" [2].

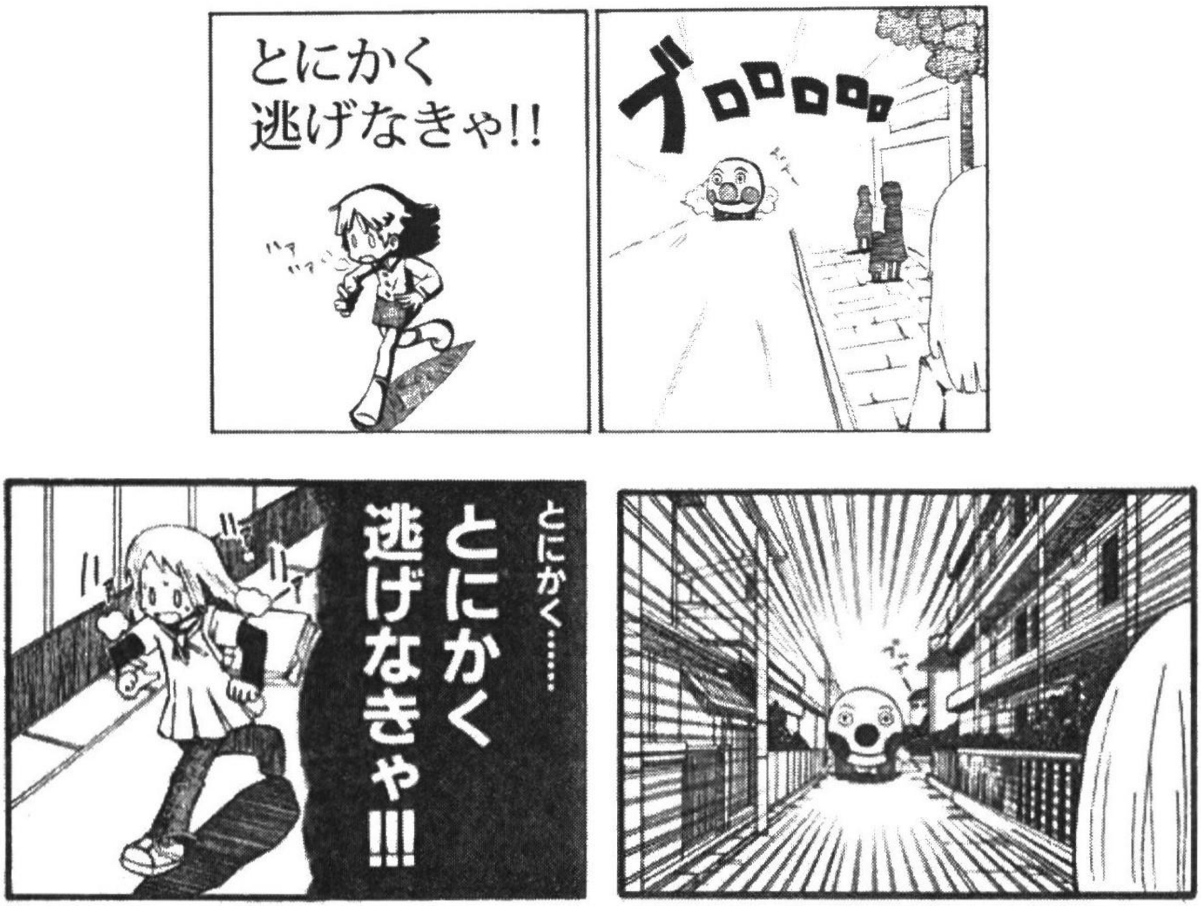
Of course, not every story in *Kazemachi* was a direct reuse from *Helvetica Standard*. However, the expressions cultivated in the creation of this work certainly added humor to the world of Arawi's works as he began his career as a professional manga artist.

Later, *Helvetica Standard* was relaunched as a commercial work. In 2008, a series with the exact same title began serialization in the magazine *Monthly Newtype* [3].

> ***In the column-like section of the anime magazine called Newtype, which went on sale on the 10th of this month, I drew Helvetica Standard. I can finally draw Helvetica commercially! It's an overwhelming feeling, somehow!***
>
> [From kumomadori blog, "Autumn Wind" (秋風), October 3, 2007]

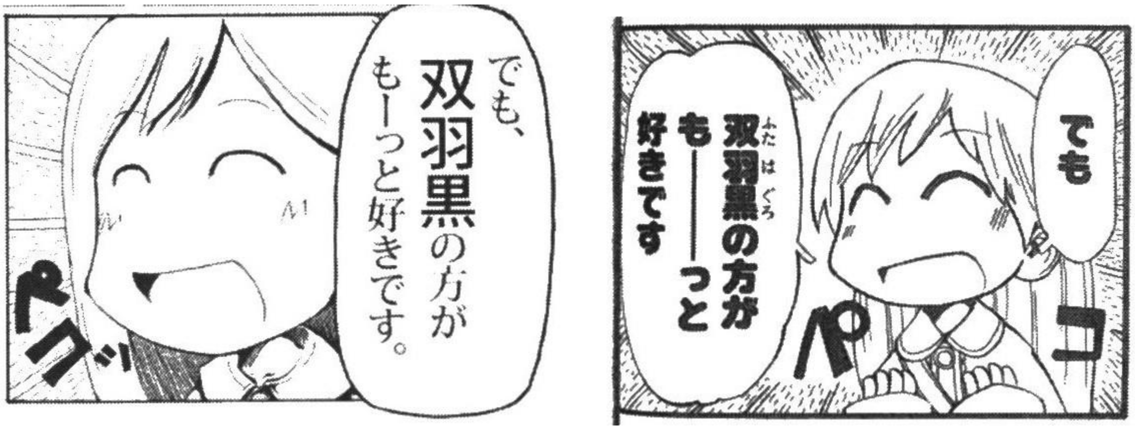
Self-homage can also be seen in the commercial serialized version of *Helvetica Standard*. For instance, "34," where Kokkuri-san (a Japanese version of the Ouija board) pronounces chirashizushi (scattered sushi) with a Tohoku dialect as tsurasuzusu, is one example. In the commercial serialized version, this was changed to "04 Chirashizushi" (titled "04 Fresh Fried Fish" in *Helvetica Standard Bold*), substituting Kokkuri-san with a Namahage.

Another example is "65," which depicted the melancholy of a man who has grown too old to play the game of putting the snack Tongari Corn (a Japanese version of the Bugles) on his fingers. This story was not only drawn as "40 Sōshite Mata Asahi wa Noboru" in the commercial serialized version but was also reused in *Kazemachi*.


ブロロロロロ
とにかく逃げなきゃ!!
とにかく……
とにかく逃げなきゃ!!!

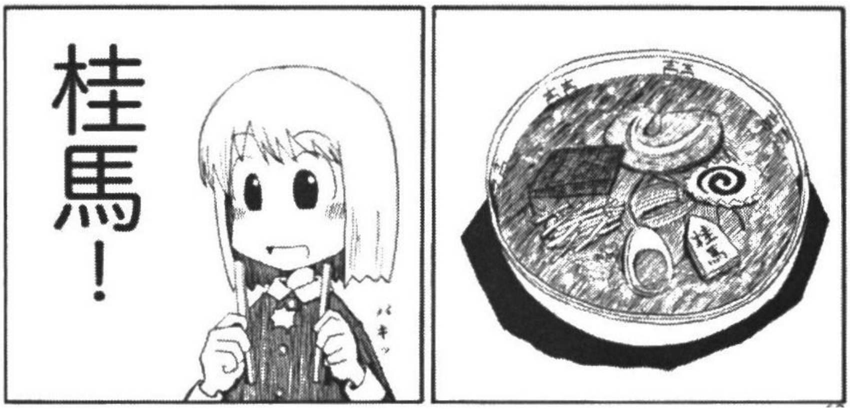
Top: From *Helvetica Standard* "32."

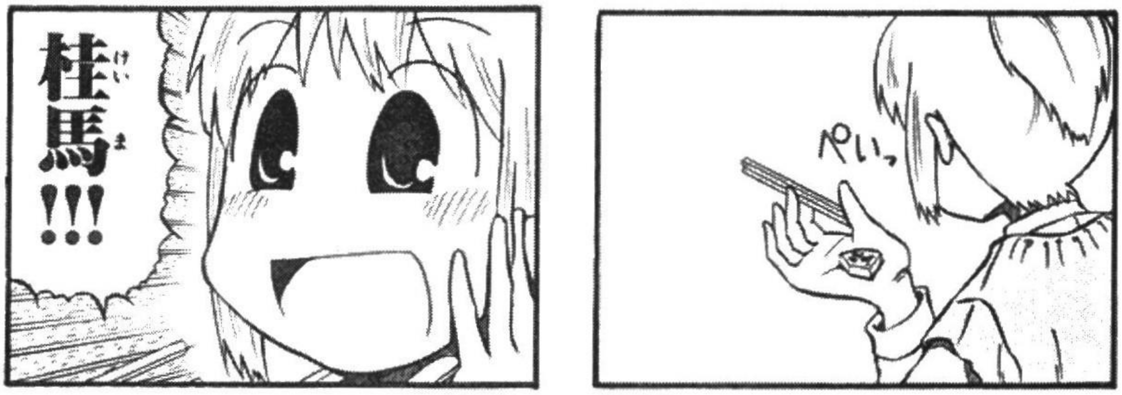
Bottom: From *Kazemachi*, published in *Monthly Comic Flapper*, March 2006.

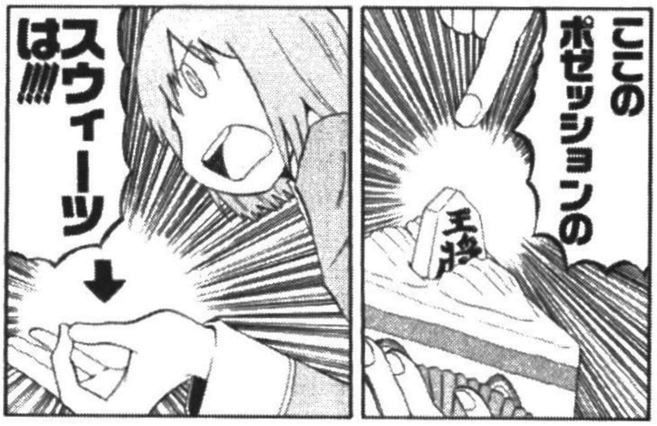

コ
でも
双羽黒の方がも――っと好きです
パ
でも、双羽黒の方がも―っと好きです。
ペクッ

Left: From *Helvetica Standard* "33."

Right: From *Kazemachi*, published in *Monthly Comic Flapper*, February 2006.






ここのポゼッションの
王将
スウィーツは!!!!

Top: From *Helvetica Standard* "50."
Middle: From *Kazemachi*, published in *Monthly Comic Flapper*, March 2006.
Bottom: From *Nichijou* Volume 2, page 175.

The Robot Girl and the Professor Girl

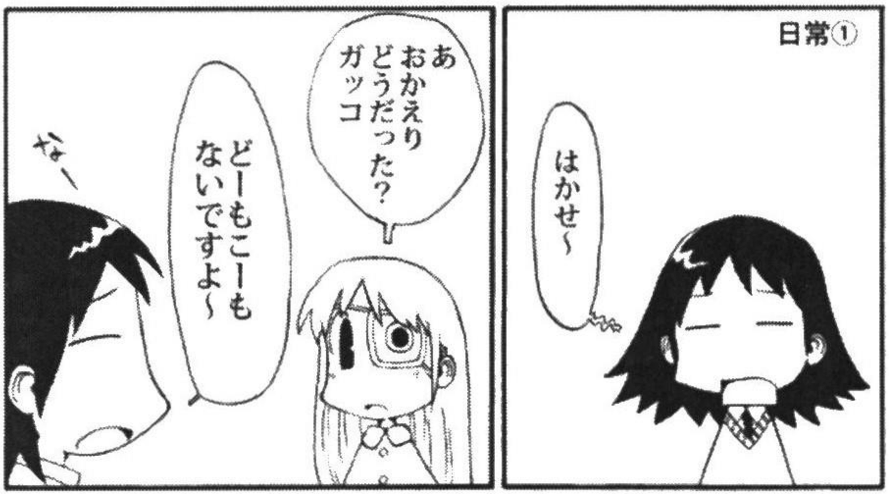
Helvetica Standard contained one more crucial idea that would later be incorporated into Nichijou: the story arc in "66," "67," "68," and "70" [4], where the girl-type robot Shinonome C-Gengo begins attending high school. These four chapters were the prototype for the episodes featuring the main *Nichijou* characters, Nano Shinonome and Hakase.

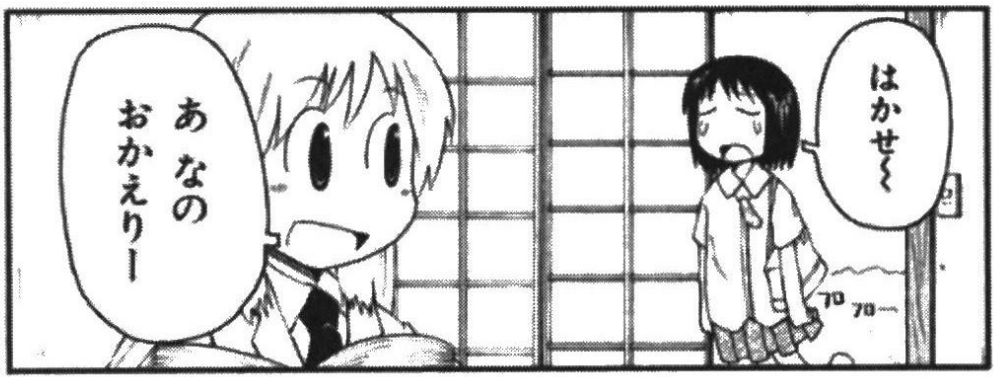
Let's first look at the stories of "66" and "67." C-Gengo (C 言語, "C-Language"), who lives with the girl the Professor, one day transfers to high school. However, due to her identity as a robot, she harbors frustrations about school life that a human would not experience. The introductory part, where she appeals these frustrations to the Professor, was common to both chapters.

In "66," C-Gengo's worry was that she was immediately exposed as a robot because of the giant screw key attached to her back. The Professor liked the screw key, but agreeing that it was not good for C-Gengo's true identity to be revealed, she replaced it with a small motor.

In "67," C-Gengo confessed her worries that she stood out because of her robot function that "automatically puts furigana (reading aids) on the kanji in the words she speaks." The Professor had installed the furigana function with good intentions, but she agreed that high school students didn't need furigana and removed the function.

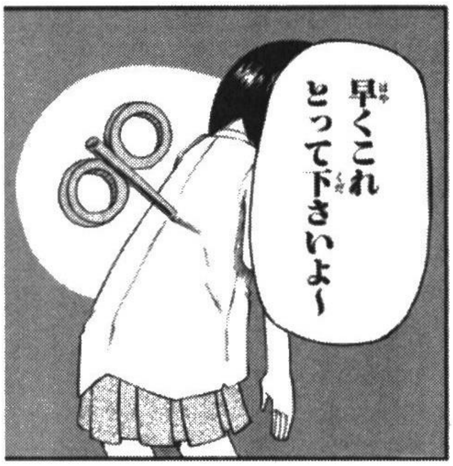
"66" used a comical feature based on her external appearance, while "67" was a metafictional gag that played with the characteristic of a manga expression (furigana in dialogue).

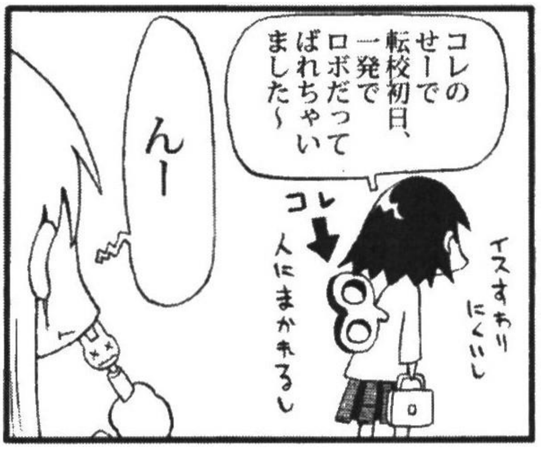

日常①
はかせ～
あ おかえり どうだった？ ガッコ
どーもこーも ないですよ～
な～


はかせ～
あ なの おかえりー
フロ フロー

Top: From *Helvetica Standard* "66."

Bottom: From *Nichijou* Volume 1, page 35.


早くこれ とって下さいよ～


コレの せーで 転校初日、一発で ロボだって ばれちゃい ました～
んー
コレ
イスすわり にくいし 人にまかれるし

Left: From *Helvetica Standard* "66."

Right: From *Nichijou* Volume 1, page 36.

These two chapters were utilized in Chapter 4 and Chapter 18 of *Nichijou* Volume 1. The core plot of the robot girl (Nano) appealing her school life worries to the Professor girl (Hakase) was directly carried over from *Helvetica Standard*.

Furthermore, Nano's sources of complaint corresponded to "66" and "67." In Chapter 4, Nano worries about the screw on her back and begs for it to be removed. This, like C-Gengo, was a result of her dislike of her robotic appearance drawing attention.

In Chapter 18, Nano is equipped with a robot function to "express the emotion of surprise by dramatically falling over." As a result, Nano is afflicted with the misfortune of falling over every time in response to Hakase's remarks. The humor of this story is generated by exaggerating and reproducing a classical manga expression. It can be said to be a more dynamic development of the comical effect of C-Gengo's dialogue having furigana.

However, if we focus on the subtle character design, there are many differences between Nano and C-Gengo, and between Hakase and the Professor. Nano's psychology, as a robot who yearns to be human, is explored more deeply, and Hakase is set as a much younger child [5].

Nonetheless, it is undeniable that *Helvetica Standard* "66" and "67" had a decisive influence on the design of Nano and Hakase.

The next two chapters featuring C-Gengo and the Professor, "68" and "70," were also related to *Nichijou*. In "68," C-Gengo and the Professor become glued to a drama program they were idly watching. This was because a housewife, reminiscent of *Sazae-san*, was being propositioned by a young liquor store employee while her husband was away.

This story, which shows the two blushing but interested in the love affair between the man and woman, was self-homaged in *Nichijou* (published in *Comic Tsūshin*, November 2010 issue). In *Nichijou*, Nano also stared intently at the TV screen, blushing at the romantic depiction in the drama [6].

In "70," C-Gengo, who has assimilated into her school class, is spoken to by a classmate. The classmate shows interest in the name "C-Gengo" and proposes the bizarre theory that the "C" in C-Gengo comes from the initial of the Hiroshima Carp baseball team. C-Gengo takes the classmate's statement at face value, and the two continue their conversation in a somewhat detached manner.

Although "70" has no direct self-homage, the concept of Nano, the robot, becoming accustomed to her new high school and deepening her friendships with her classmates, was sprinkled throughout various chapters of *Nichijou*.

By the way, the series of episodes featuring C-Gengo were subtitled "Nichijou" (Ordinary). The humor of describing the unusual scene of a girl-type robot living like an average high school student as "ordinary" is contained in this subtitle.

However, beyond that, it is clear that this subtitle "Nichijou" became the namesake for *Nichijou*. The four chapters featuring C-Gengo and the Professor, alongside *Homare*, brought significant influence to the creation of *Nichijou*.

---

[1]. The outfit worn by the girl in this episode was also reused as the dress for Princess Starla of the Fey Kingdom in *Nichijou* Volume 2, Chapter 34.

[2]. Strictly speaking, the work that reused this idea was the self-produced manga *Nichijou*, which Arawi presented at Comitia 75 in February 2006. After Arawi won the Encouragement Prize at the 22nd Ace Newcomer Manga Award with this self-produced manga, it was included in *Nichijou* Volume 2 as "Nichijou no Prototype 2" with minimal corrections.

[3]. To be precise, a one-shot manga was first published in the November 2007 issue of *Monthly Newtype*, and the formal serialization began in the April 2008 issue. The one-shot episode is included in *Helvetica Standard Bold* as "00 Apt. 101," and the episode immediately after the serialization began is included as "01 Grim Reaper."

[4]. A character presumed to be C-Gengo was also depicted with the genius girl in *Helvetica Standard* "8." While there is no doubt that the "8" episode became the basis for the four chapters from "66" onward, it is also plausible that C-Gengo's characterization had not yet been finalized at this stage.

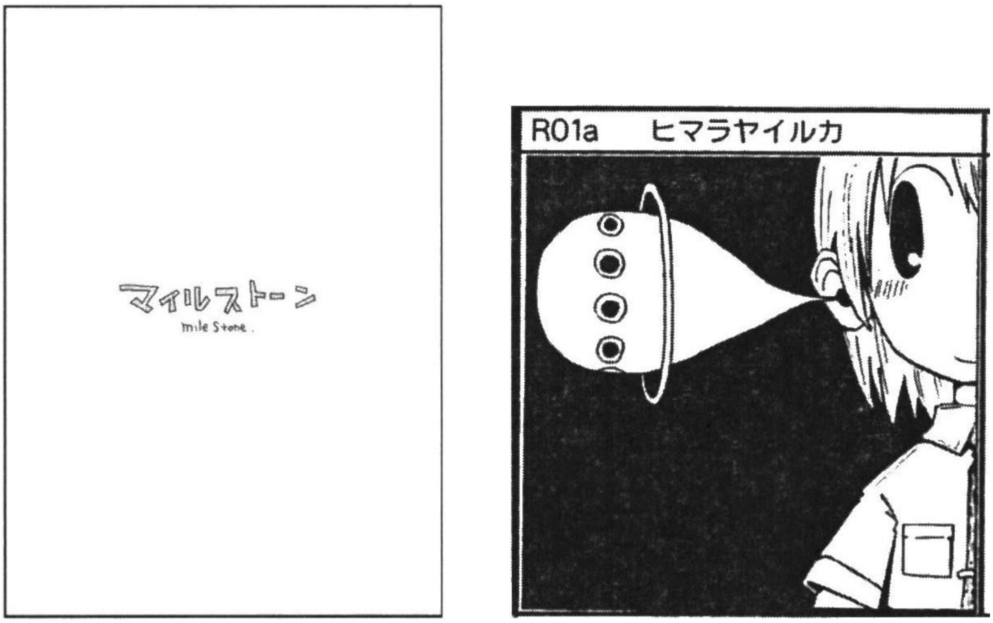
[5]. A major difference from *Helvetica Standard* was that the episodes featuring Nano also conveyed the theme of affirming one's non-ordinary self. Initially, Nano yearned to be a normal human and disliked her identity as a robot, but after being accepted by her friends at her new school, she became less concerned about her own nature. The theme depicted through Nano will be covered in detail in Volume 2 of this book, which focuses heavily on *Nichijou*.

[6]. It was also reprinted in the "Comic Communication" section included in the *Helvetica Standard Bold* collected volume.

The Distance Between a Professional Manga Artist and Me #1: *Milestone* (November 2004)

Milestone (マイルストーン)

- November 21, 2004, at Comitia 70 (Circle Space R01a)
- Distributed together with the free paper *Shouwa. Ichi*.
- Offset printing, B5 size, 24 pages total, Circle Name: Himarayairuka, Byline: Arawi Keiichi


マイルストーン
mile Stone.
R01a ヒマラヤイルカ

Left: *Miestone* Cover

Right: Himarayairuka Circle Cut published in *Tia's Magazine 70*.

"Let's Meet on Another Way"

Let's briefly review Arawi's trajectory since aspiring to become a manga artist.

Arawi began seriously drawing manga in 2002 and continuously participated in Comitia from *Shiawase no Kakudo* in 2003 onward. Through the presentation of his self-produced manga, he steadily honed his skills and unique worldview necessary for working as a professional manga artist.

Entering 2004, he was further stimulated by works like *Manga Michi* and *Tokiwa-sō no Seishun*, strengthening his yearning to become a professional manga artist. He also completed two works that became the direct prototypes for commercial serialization: *Helvetica Standard* and *Homare*. The former's ideas were incorporated into his commercial debut work *Kazemachi* and the commercial serialized version of *Helvetica Standard*, while the latter influenced the background designs and themes of *Nichijou*. Furthermore, the designs for the five main characters who appear in *Nichijou*—Nano, Hakase, Yukko, Mai, and Mio—were born from these two works.

Put simply, the completion of these two works seems to have paved the way for him to reach commercial manga serialization. After his daily struggles with manga manuscripts, he finally held the map to his dream of debuting as a professional manga artist.

Of course, the goal of becoming a professional manga artist was still far away, and he needed to devote himself to drawing more than ever before. But it was also true that all he needed now was the resolve to run straight toward that goal.

The 7th self-produced manga, *Milestone*, was born against this backdrop. The most significant characteristic of this work, announced at Comitia 70 on November 22, 2004, is that it marked a milestone in his self-produced manga activities. Following the publication of this work, Arawi temporarily withdrew from Comitia activities. He then dedicated himself to drawing manuscripts to submit directly to publishers, aiming for a commercial manga debut.

The title *Milestone* originates from the markers placed at regular intervals along a road to indicate the distance from the starting point. By extension, it also signifies an important, landmark event. In that sense, this work can be called a "milestone" in the literal meaning of the word.

Before delving into the main story of *Milestone*, let's first look at a part that reveals Arawi's mindset at the time. The colophon of this work included the phrase: "Let's meet on another way!!" This line can be interpreted as a declaration that he was seriously embarking on the path to becoming a professional manga artist. He was making a promise to the reader to "meet again" on a path different from Comitia—namely, in a commercial manga magazine.

> ***"Let's meet on another way!!" This was a considerably important message for me. I remember writing it to express my decision, "I will definitely become a manga artist!"*** [From an interview for this book]

This strong feeling, "I will definitely become a professional manga artist!" is clearly reflected in *Milestone*. This is because the work is a metaphorical manga that figuratively depicts his mindset of aiming for a commercial manga debut, entrusting it to the actions of the main girl character (who is unnamed).

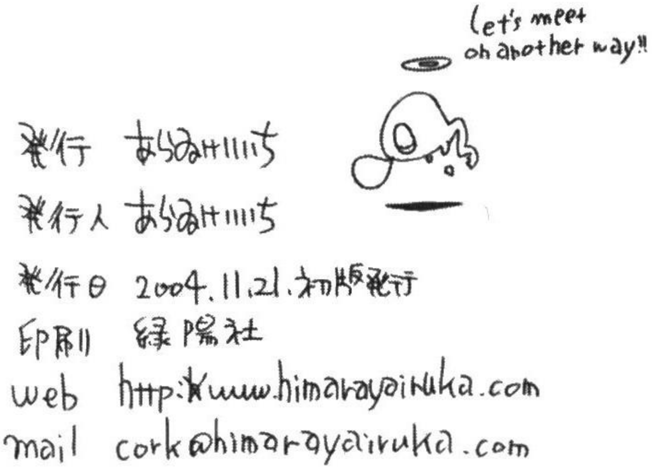
In its symbolic representation of Arawi's inner self, this work contains elements connected to *Hakoniwa* and *Hane*. On the other hand, the depiction of his genuine desire to become a professional manga artist, mixed with fiction, can be seen as an extension of the essay manga style of *Helvetica Standard*.

A manga written to solidify his resolve to proceed down the path of a manga artist while carrying on the legacy of his past works—that is *Milestone*. We will refer to this genre of work as "Manga Michi Manga" in this book.

The story of *Milestone* begins with the girl gazing at gigantic manga drawing tools far in the distance. The tools are so colossal they resemble a mountain range, each one boasting a majestic presence. The girl apparently wishes to walk to the spot where these tools loom.

The colossal manga tools far away and the girl attempting to reach them—it is clear that these two depictions represent the author's state of mind. Through the story of walking toward the manga tools, he was trying to predict the outcome of his own dream.

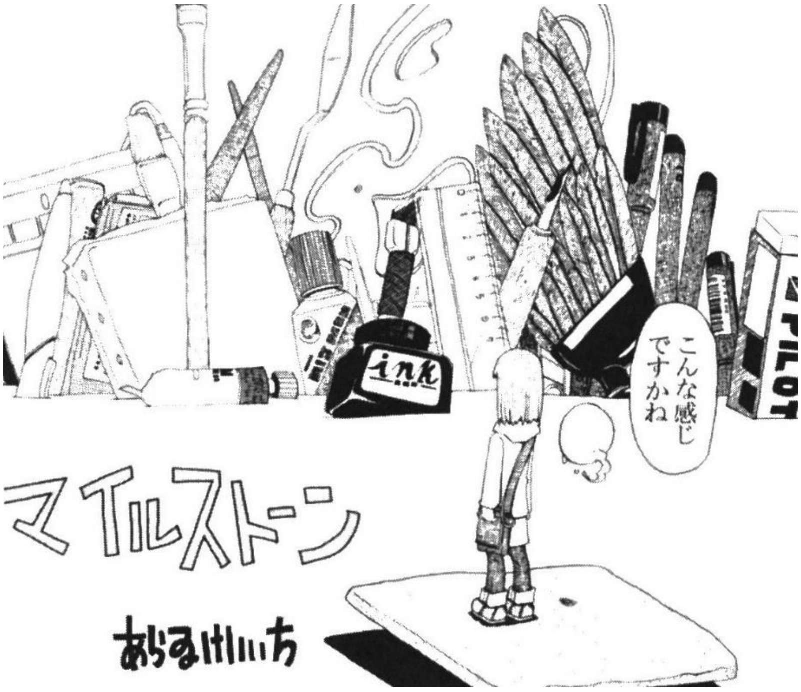
This mysterious space is also suggested to be the world of the girl's imagined images (mindscape). The girl, too, probably aspires to be a manga artist and aims for professionalism, just like Arawi. Therefore, she envisioned herself walking to the place where the gigantic manga tools were located, within her spiritual world [1].



let's meet
on another way!!

発行 あらゐけいいち
発行人 あらゐけいいち
発行日 2004.11.21. 初版発行
印刷 緑陽社
web http://www.himarayairuka.com
mail cork@himarayairuka.com

Milestone colophon.


PILOT
ink
こんな感じですかね
マイルストーン
あらゐけいいち

From *Milestone*, page 3: The colossal manga drawing tools spread out before the girl.

Following the gigantic manga tools, a unique feature of this work is introduced: the floating stones (uki-ishi), which serve as footholds. Depicted literally as rock formations slightly levitating above the ground, the floating stone was also the girl's current location.

The floating stone, only about half a tatami mat in size, feels cramped, and the girl wants to leave it immediately and head to her destination with the manga tools. However, contrary to her desire, she cannot seem to move. This is because there is no path ahead of the floating stone, and she cannot imagine what awaits her one step forward.

The girl is frozen in place, although she aims for the location of the manga tools. This depiction also projects Arawi's state of mind. Through the girl's mouth, he voiced the feeling of being torn between aspiration and anxiety and the desire to confess, "I can't take a step."

However, the girl eventually decides to step off the floating stone and move forward despite her anxiety. Her progress was linked to Arawi's action of dedicating himself to commercial manga after completing this work. Perhaps it was because he was able to depict a character moving forward in this work that the author himself was able to make such a big decision.

In the next section, let's look at the process by which the girl (=Arawi) leaves the floating stone and begins her walk toward the destination.

The Tree is So Ripe

The girl aspiring to be a manga artist was frozen in fear, though she aimed for the gigantic manga tools in her mindscape. However, she eventually took heart and began to move forward toward her destination.

At this moment, a presence was there to encourage the frightened girl: a one-eyed ghost. The pairing of a girl and a mascot character was employed here once again.

Incidentally, the design of the ghost first appeared in *Helvetica Standard* "57," which was written a month before *Milestone*. Given the timing, Arawi likely liked the design of this ghost and made it reappear in the present work [2].

Now, this ghost has a unique way of encouraging its hesitant companion to take a step: it conveys its encouragement by "sprouting a tree from its own head."

How should this seemingly absurd depiction be interpreted? In fact, this depiction also reflects Arawi's state of mind. He was metaphorically expressing his hope of becoming a professional manga artist through the motif of tree growth.

Even before *Milestone*, Arawi had incorporated the motif of plant growth into his creative works. The earliest instance can be found in the opening poem of his compilation work, *Sasameyuki*. Although we covered it in the *Sasameyuki* section, let's quote it again:

> ***Years ago, at a different time,***
> ***I saw the same dream.***
> ***A wide, hot,***
> ***longed-for world.***
> ***That which fell from the sky***
> ***touched my body,***
> ***and sprouted from my right hand.***
> [From the opening poem of *Sasameyuki*]

In early 2004, Arawi was impressed by *Manga Michi* and *Tokiwa-sō no Seishun*, renewing his aspiration to be a professional manga artist. Therefore, with the phrase "The continuation of the dream with my own feet," he wrote the above poem to express his resolve to pursue a professional manga career.

The bud sprouting from the right hand that holds the pen was a metaphor for the manga skills and passion "growing" inside the author. He incorporated the image of a bud that, believing in its own potential, would eventually grow into a large tree.

Next, the motif of plant growth is seen in the self-produced CD, *ugokazu*. In May 2004, Arawi, who composed DTM (Desktop Music) alongside drawing manga, decided to create a CD of his own songs. The jacket illustration he drew at the time featured a composition with a sprout growing from a cat's tail. Furthermore, he stated that the theme of the illustration was "moving forward without moving."

"Not moving" from the spot, yet steadily "moving forward." This represents a tree that, while remaining still on the ground, extends its branches and leaves toward the heavens. More accurately, he was using a plant as a metaphor for a manga artist who silently produces work at their desk.

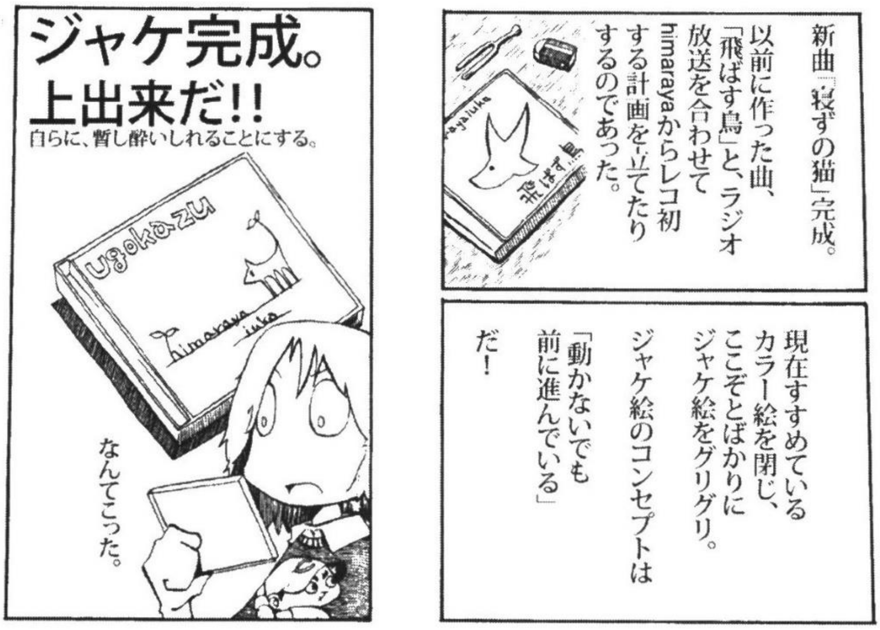
At the time *ugokazu* was announced, Arawi had not yet achieved any tangible results. Therefore, he remained in a state of self-doubt about whether he was getting closer to becoming a professional manga artist.

However, he also felt a definite response to the quality of his Comitia manga and *Helvetica Standard*. That is why he symbolically depicted his experience and passion with the image of a plant that continues to grow from a bud to a sapling, and eventually into a magnificent tree.

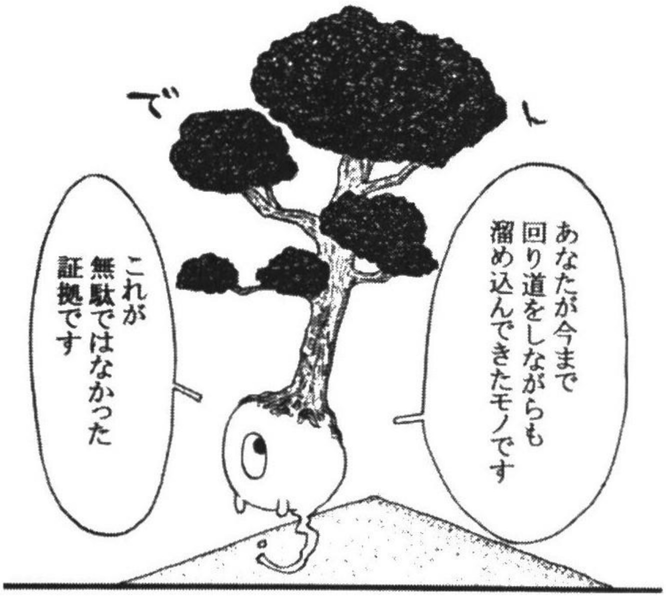
Based on the bud in the *Sasameyuki* opening poem and the sprout in the *ugokazu* illustration, the interpretation of the tree in *Milestone* is not difficult. The ghost, trying to encourage the girl, pointed to the tree growing from its body and said, "This is what you have accumulated despite taking detours. This is the proof that it was not in vain." This tree was the dignified, mature form of the bud that sprouted from the right hand in the *Sasameyuki* poem.

Arawi dreamed of becoming a manga artist in his youth but took many detours instead of aiming straight for professionalism. However, as the ghost says, those experiences were not in vain. On the contrary, precisely because he steadily accumulated life experiences, he was able to grow into a distinctive manga artist.

That is why the tree growing from the ghost's body gave Arawi (=the girl) the courage to take a step forward.


新曲「寝ずの猫」完成。
以前に作った曲、「飛ばす鳥」と、ラジオ放送を合わせてhimarayaからレコ初する計画を立てたりするのであった。
飛ばす鳥
現在すすめているカラー絵を閉じ、ここぞとばかりにジャケ絵をグリグリ。
ジャケ絵のコンセプトは「動かないでも前に進んでいる」だ！
ジャケ完成。
上出来だ!!
自らに、暫し酔いしれることにする。
ugokazu
himaraya iuka
なんてこった。

From *Helvetica Standard* "23." Arawi is moved by the finished *ugokazu* CD jacket.


でん
あなたが今まで回り道をしながらも溜め込んできたモノです
これが無駄ではなかった証拠です

From *Milestone*, page 5: The ghost with a tree growing from its head.

The ghost further celebrated her future by using a pun, saying, "Ki wa mō konna ni jukushite iru n desu yo" (木はもうこんなに熟しているんですよ, "The tree is already so ripe"). In Japanese, "Ki wa jukushite iru" (木は熟している, "The tree is ripe") sounds identical to "Ki wa jukushite iru" (機は熟している, "The time is ripe"), meaning "The time is ripe." Therefore, there is no need to hesitate to take the step toward becoming a professional manga artist, even if the path ahead is not visible.

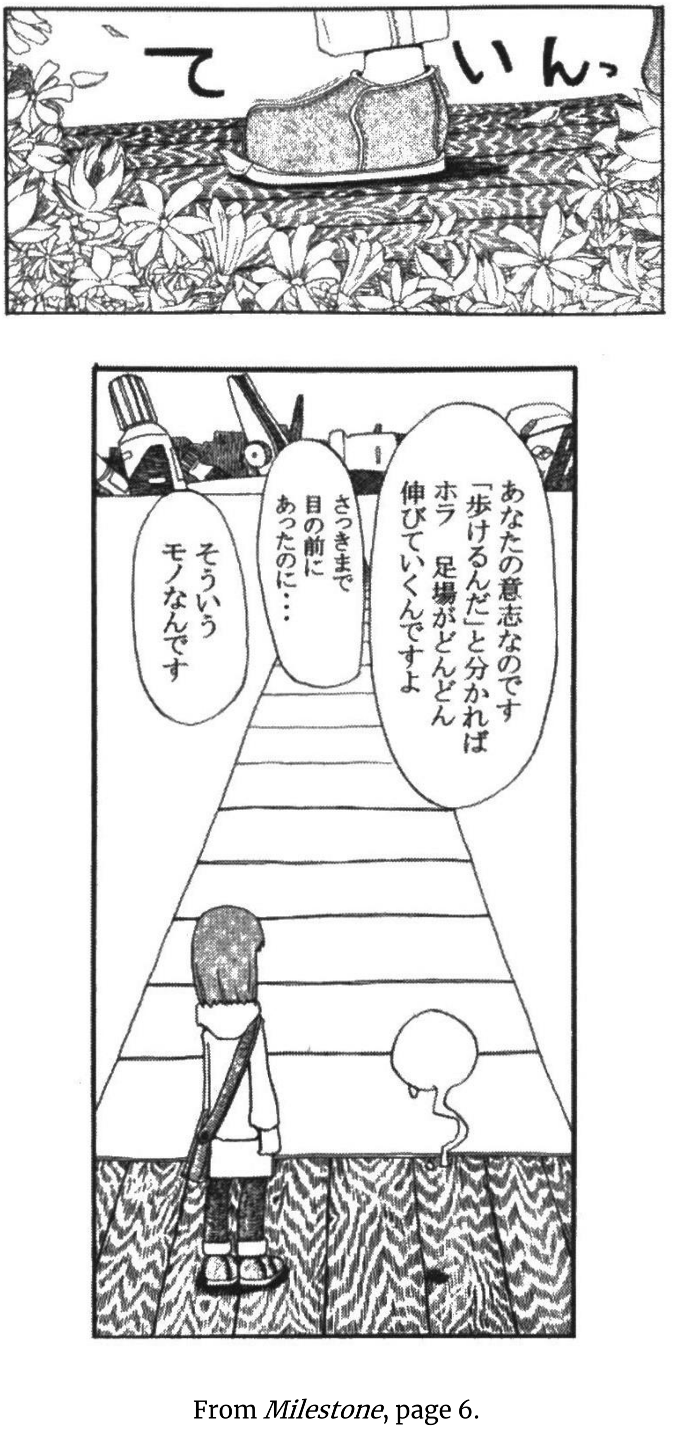
In response to this call, the girl begins to walk toward the world where the manga tools are placed.

Afterward, the girl sees a wooden bridge and blooming flowers one step off the floating stone [3]. It goes without saying that this is a motif that is an extension of the tree.

If the growth of the tree is a metaphor for his growth as a manga artist, the wooden bridge symbolizes the path to a professional manga artist, built by cutting wood (his experience). The flowers, on the other hand, are thought to represent the exhilaration of beginning an unknown challenge and the joy of stepping into a new field.

The girl, leaving the floating stone and heading toward her destination, was filled with hope. No one can predict what hardships lie ahead. But the will to summon up the courage to move toward the destination is blessed. This was hinted at by the long wooden bridge and the flowers celebrating her first step.

These depictions of plants must have been, above all, an encouragement to Arawi himself, who was also aiming to become a professional manga artist.


ていんっ
あなたの意志なのです 「歩けるんだ」と分かれば ホラ 足場がどんどん 伸びていくんですよ
さっきまで 目の前に あったのに・・・
そういう モノなんです

From *Milestone*, page 6.

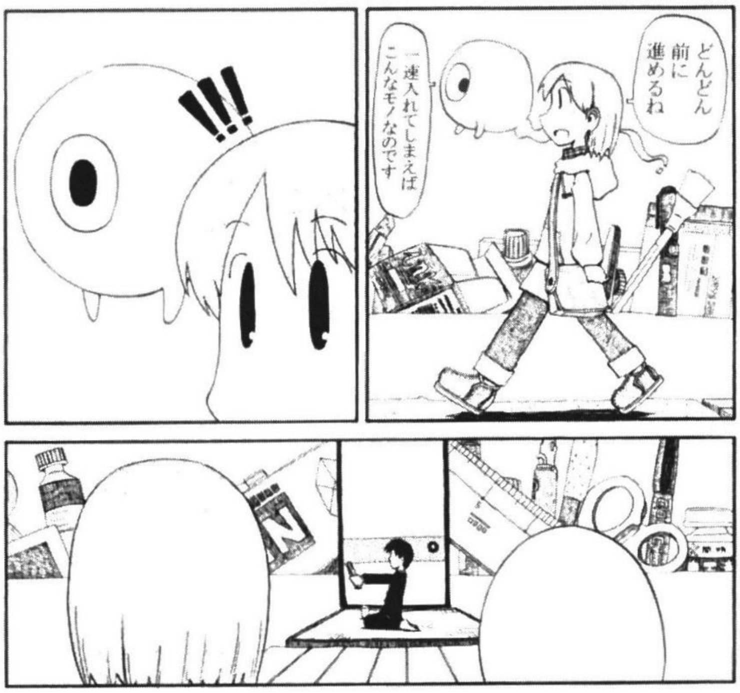
Critique and Response from the Past Self

The girl in *Milestone* gains the courage to proceed toward her destination with the manga tools, encouraged by the tree sprouted by the ghost. She resolutely crossed the bridge made of wooden planks, which was born from her own experience.

However, the girl does not arrive at her destination smoothly. The journey is still long, and a mysterious male student obstructs her path. For some reason, the male student was waiting for her, sitting seiza style on a tatami mat.

The objects that appeared in this work—the manga tools, the floating stone, and the ghost's tree—were all given symbolic meanings. Therefore, it is expected that the male student sitting on the tatami also holds some significance. How should we understand this new character?

The key to deciphering this lies in Shūji Terayama's film, *Pastoral Hide and Seek*. As we will touch on again later, Arawi was influenced by Terayama's works around this time. *Pastoral Hide and Seek* features a surreal scene where the male protagonist confronts his student-era self on a tatami mat.


どんどん前に進めるね
一速入れてしまえばこんなモノなのです
!!!

From *Milestone*, page 7.

Arawi must have been strongly attracted to such a surrealistic scene. That is why he incorporated the depiction of the girl and the male student confronting each other on a tatami mat in *Milestone*, which is reminiscent of Terayama's imagery.

What is interesting is that *Pastoral Hide and Seek* is heavily autobiographical, and the protagonist male resembles Terayama himself. Thus, the depiction of the man meeting his student self was perceived as the present Terayama encountering his past self.

Therefore, the male student in *Milestone* can also be seen as a symbol of Arawi in his student days. Just as the girl in this work was depicted as a symbol of the present author aspiring to become a professional manga artist. In other words, the encounter between the girl and the male student can be interpreted as the confrontation between the present and student-era Arawi. This work replicated the structure of *Pastoral Hide and Seek*, where the current artist confronts their past self.

What words do the girl and the male student—the present and student-era Arawi—exchange when they meet? Looking at *Pastoral Hide and Seek*, the exchange between the past and present selves does not lead to a good outcome. The man (Terayama) is tormented as his student-era self exposes the memories of his ugly hometown.

Perhaps influenced by Terayama, the male student in *Milestone* also digs up memories that are painful for the girl (=Arawi). He brings up past memories that cast doubt on her resolve to become a manga artist.

The male student lists the following words: "To you who can see far away but yield to the flow," "To you who just sit at the crossroads," "To you who say things but don't follow through," "To you who realize a week has passed," "To you who decide your rank in two or three days," "To you who immediately blame an illness you don't even have."

The male student knew well that the girl (=Arawi) had attempted many dreams but failed to see them through to a successful completion. That is why he could not help but intervene, saying that aiming for a goal is fine, but wouldn't this dream also fail?

"Do you really think you can become a professional manga artist, you 'who couldn't keep a goal going?'" This series of questions concludes with "To you who harbor doubts about that single step." The student's demeanor was calm, but also seemed provocative.

The girl could have been discouraged or angered by his sharp words. However, without flinching, she replies with dignity, "Yeah, I'm okay."

Indeed, as the male student said, the girl had dreamed multiple dreams but failed to achieve visible results. But after being supported by the "things accumulated despite taking detours" (the tree), she no longer has any hesitation. The single phrase "I'm okay" succinctly conveyed that her desire to become a professional manga artist was genuine.

Sensing her unwavering resolve, the male student opens the sliding door installed behind the tatami and urges her to proceed [4]. He then offers words of encouragement: "The flowers bloom, the fruit ripens, and eventually bursts, but also surely, the seed is there." The male student (=Past Arawi), who knew her past well and was therefore more anxious about her future than anyone, finally acknowledged the girl (=Present Arawi).

The poetic expression "The flowers bloom, the fruit ripens, and eventually bursts, but also surely, the seed is there" (花は咲き　実は熟し　やがて爆ぜる　だがそれもしかり　そこに種あり, Hana wa saki mi wa jukushi yagate hazeru. Daga sore mo shikari soko ni tane ari) is an extension of the recurring plant motif in this work.

The tree represented his growth as a manga artist, the wooden planks symbolized the path to a professional manga artist, and the flowers represented the exhilaration of stepping into an unknown world. Expanding on these metaphors, Arawi, having solidified his resolve to become a professional manga artist, is expected to bear many "fruits of creation" in the future.

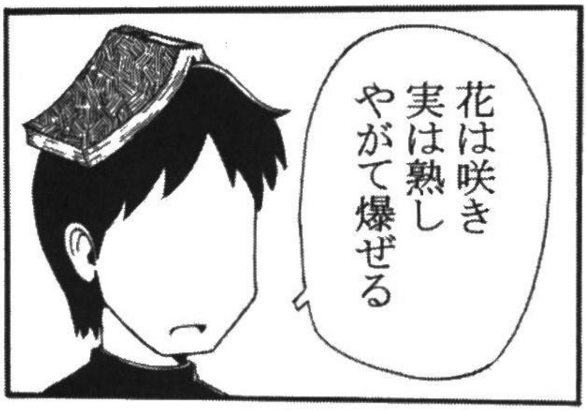
He can now create unseen works in addition to the manga he has made so far. With this expectation for the future, he used the expression "The flowers bloom, the fruit ripens."

"And eventually bursts, but also surely, the seed is there" indicates that a manga once created will become the inspiration for the next work. The fruit, or work, not only entertains the reader with its flavor but also leaves behind the seed for the manga the artist will create in the future—just as the fruit of *Helvetica Standard* and *Homare* became the seeds for the commercial serialized works *Kazemachi* and *Nichijou*.

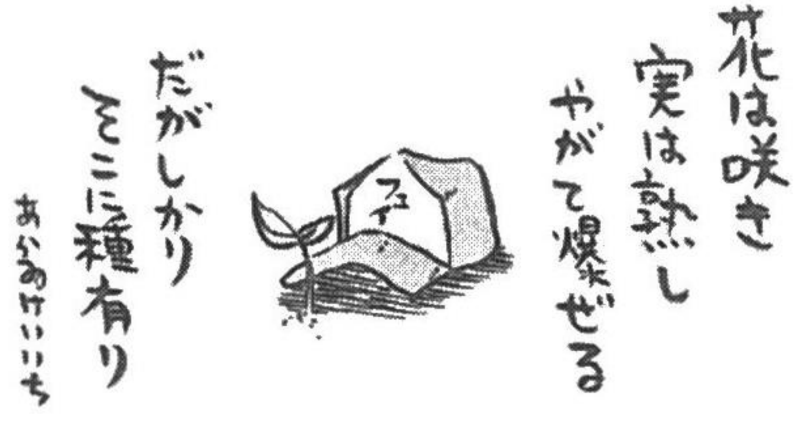
Furthermore, the message to forget the fruit (=work) produced in the past and nurture the next seed can be read from "the seed is there." With this poem, Arawi declared that he would carry on his past self-produced manga while moving toward a new goal: commercial manga magazines. This was clearly shown in the girl's actions of moving forward without looking back at the male student.

The poem starting with "The flowers bloom" further spurs the girl aiming to become a professional manga artist. Encouraged by the male student, the girl—Arawi—wished to advance even further down this path to becoming a manga artist.

> ***More, more. More. I want to cross about three more mountains. More.***
> [From Himarayairuka, "More" (もっと), September 3, 2003]


花は咲き実は熟しやがて爆ぜる

From *Milestone*, page 10.


花は咲き
実は熟し
やがて爆ぜる
だがしかり
そこに種有り
あらゐけいいち
フェイ

Nichijou Volume 4, cover backside illustration. The male student's words are self-homaged in *Nichijou*. Incidentally, the composition of the illustration, with new buds sprouting beside the hats of the Fey Kingdom soldiers, is a parody of the final scene of Hayao Miyazaki's film, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*.

Creators Who Are Ahead of Me

The interaction between the girl and the male student was intended as a virtual exchange between the present Arawi and the student-era Arawi. Therefore, the scene where she conveys her resolve to the male student could be read as a moment where she informs her past self of her determination to pursue the dream of becoming a professional manga artist.

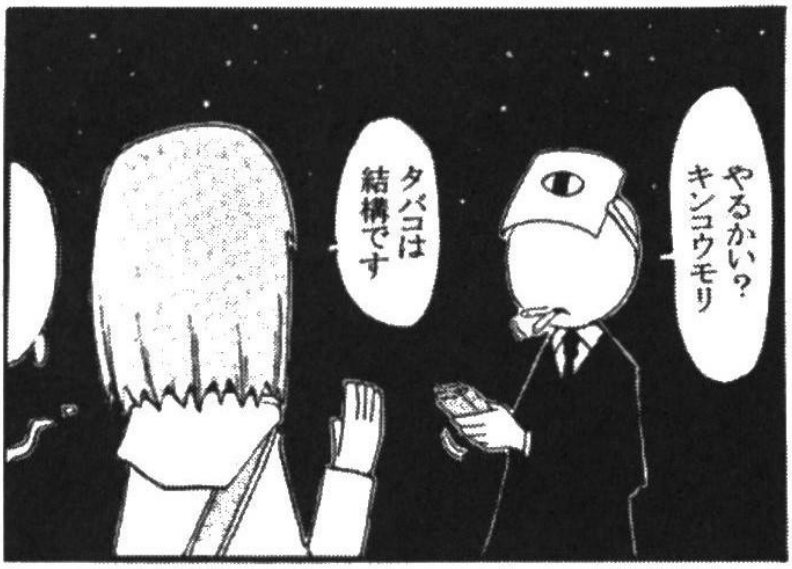
The girl then smoothly walks toward the place where the manga tools stand. After confirming her true feelings through the exchange with the male student, it seemed there were no more obstacles. However, there was one more trial she had to overcome. She was unexpectedly stopped by an unidentified phantom who appeared after the male student.

The surroundings had somehow fallen to dusk, and the night sky spread overhead. The girl, who had parted from the male student and walked the endless journey, suddenly stops and is captivated by the beautiful stars.

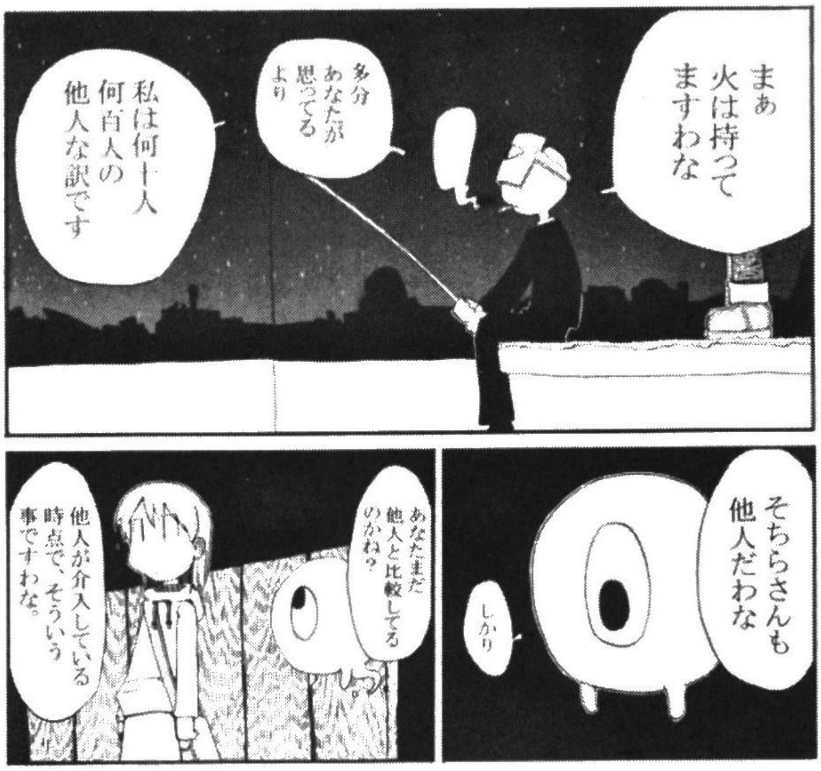
As she is absorbed in looking up at the stars, she is called from behind. Turning around, she sees a man with an unusual appearance standing there. The man had a faceless without eyes, nose, ears, or hair, and was wearing a mask with a single eye drawn on it.

The faceless man asks the girl for a light, making the gesture of smoking a cigarette. He then offers her a Golden Bat (a brand of cigarette), saying, "Want one? Kinkōmori" (Golden Bat). When the girl refuses, the faceless man nonchalantly takes out a matchbox from his pocket and lights the cigarette.

The girl feels teased and is angered by the man's nonchalant action. However, the faceless man maintains his elusive attitude. Furthermore, after puffing the cigarette smoke, he makes a cryptic statement: "I am dozens, hundreds of others than you think."


やるかい？キンコウモリ
タバコは結構です

From *Milestone*, page 12.


まぁ火は持ってますわな
多分あなたが思ってるより
私は何十人何百人の他人な訳です
そちらさんも他人だわな
しかり
あなたまだ他人と比較してるのかね？
他人が介入している時点で、そういう事ですわな。

From *Milestone*, page 13.

What was the intention behind drawing this faceless man? Just as the male student was influenced by *Pastoral Hide and Seek*, the faceless man was also born from a work that Arawi was engrossed in at the time: Ōji Suzuki's manga, *Match Ippon no Hanashi* (マッチ一本の話, "The Story of a Single Match").

Ōji Suzuki began working in the magazine *Monthly Manga Garo* in the 1970s and attracted attention for his lyrical and fantastical works. Arawi, who was interested in *Garo*, also came to know and be impressed by Suzuki's work [5]. This can be confirmed by the instance where he quoted the line "It's eternal the day after tomorrow, isn't it?" from Suzuki's short manga, *Tokyo Goodbye* (東京グッドバイ)[6].

The influence this work received from *Match Ippon no Hanashi* is evident when comparing the opening parts of both works. *Match Ippon no Hanashi* begins with a traveling medicine vendor being addressed by a boy on a night road. The boy, who enjoys smoking despite his age, approaches the vendor asking for a match light. The vendor is struck by the strange behavior of the boy who offers him a cigarette from his favorite brand, Golden Bat, saying, "Want a Kinkōmori?"

It is clear that the encounter between the girl and the faceless man in *Milestone* is tracing the exchange between the vendor and the boy. Although there are minor differences, this work pays homage to the development where a person walking a long journey is asked for a cigarette light by a mysterious figure at night.

However, even by referencing *Match Ippon no Hanashi*, we cannot understand why the faceless man refers to himself as "dozens, hundreds of others." Arawi, while following Suzuki's manga, incorporates his own unique setting for the faceless man [7]. To get to the bottom of this mysterious figure, we need to explore his conversation with the girl.

The faceless man throws the following words at her in rapid succession. The content is contemplative and also sounds like a critique of the girl:

"Are you still comparing yourself to others? If others are involved, that's what it means." "If so, you are still unaware, however." "It's not that I want to fish or anything, but ultimately, there is only one coordinate." "Even if you can connect the lines to form a shape, it's just one part of a big lump." "You and others can sympathize and influence each other, but you are never the same." "The question is how to keep yourself within that." "I, too, am talking about not being able to catch a big fish in your territory."

These words, considering the girl (=Arawi) is aiming to be a professional manga artist, allow us to infer his true identity. The faceless man, who claimed to be "dozens, hundreds of others," was a symbol of the "unspecified multitude of creators" who have influenced him.

Up until now, Arawi had created manga by referencing many preceding works. In this book, we have seen numerous instances where he incorporated the essence of works made by his predecessors into his own work, relying on the feeling of "somehow liking."

The presence of countless favorite artists is etched into Arawi's heart. He expressed these figures, who occupy a large part of his mind, as the masked faceless man in *Milestone*. And the faceless man stood in the girl's (=Arawi's) way and poured cold water on her, asking, "Are you still comparing yourself to others?"

There is nothing wrong with creating new works under the influence of others. However, to create works overflowing with originality as a professional manga artist, one needs to be sensitive to the influence of others. Otherwise, one can only produce derivative works that imitate someone else.

One cannot create without being influenced by other creators. And yet, if one is too heavily influenced by others, there is no need for oneself to draw a new manga. This dilemma of not knowing how to maintain distance from other artists was expressed through the depiction of the elusive faceless man.

Ultimately, the "Coordinate" is One

A work cannot be created without being influenced by others, but too much influence stifles originality. Arawi had been aware of the conflict expressed in Milestone for years. Even before he started aiming to be a manga artist (in 2001), he left a self-analysis that he tended to "get carried away as soon as I'm influenced."

> ***I often listen to music, but I try not to read the liner notes before or while listening to a CD. It's partly because I have a personality that is easily swayed, but reading the liner notes makes my perspective linear. (What a weak person I am.) It's not an explanation, but I realized that and started ink painting intuitively. However, when I look at and am influenced by the works of other artists, I often get carried away and think things like, "How can I show this painting in my ink painting?" or "If I draw this illustration as is in ink painting, won't it become mine?" Many of the pictures I have drawn so far have turned out this way.***
> [From Arai-ryū Sumi-e, October 28, 2001]

The girl in *Milestone* was serious about becoming a professional manga artist. However, there remains some doubt as to whether she was aiming for truly original works. If the girl had the confidence to create works without overthinking others, the image of her walking alone toward the manga tools would have been drawn. Instead, the girl allowed the faceless man to intervene in this world she imagined.

The presence of the faceless man—the symbol of the "dozens, hundreds of others" (the inspiring artists) who had entered the girl's (=Arawi's) heart—attested to the fact that she had not yet fully pursued originality.

The faceless man's dialogue, listed in the previous section, can be read as a criticism that the girl (=Arawi), aspiring to be a professional manga artist, had not yet fully grasped "how to keep herself." More accurately, the anxiety of feeling that she had not established her originality and the fear of being emotionally swayed by other artists were entrusted to the presence of the faceless man.

So, what should one do to acquire originality? The answer was hidden in a poem Arawi would later publish, "Beyond What is Exhaled."

> ***The things that predecessors exhaled, are received by people with interest and influence, and the people who received them exhale again. Just as the filter that exhales is diverse, the thing changes shape thousands of times, and creates something else. [...] No matter how much you***

> ***receive of what is exhaled, you can't get close just by receiving. Even so, even if it's a failure, if you take one step, you feel like you can change the present situation. Don't worry too much about that part.*** [From kumomadori blog, "Beyond What is Exhaled" (吐き出された先に), April 28, 2007]

What Arawi established was a kind of optimistic attitude. He developed the thought that if what was received from other creators was exhaled through "the filter of my own sensibility," it had already transformed into something else.

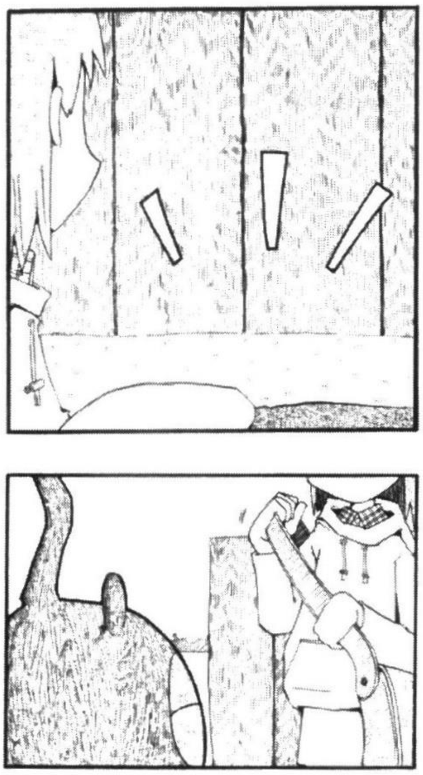
Perhaps one cannot get closer to being a professional manga artist just by receiving the creations exhaled by others. But he thought one shouldn't "worry too much about that." He could create original manga simply by following his sensibility and emotions and "taking one step, the present situation can be changed." Following this line of thought, Arawi regained his confidence [8].

The line, "Even so, even if it's a failure, if you take one step, you feel like you can change the present situation," also resonated with the story of *Milestone*. Just as the poem suggests, the girl breaks free from her worries about originality and takes another step forward, leading to the conclusion of the story.

In the final scene of the work, the girl, who has fallen asleep from exhaustion [9], witnesses a dramatically transformed world when she wakes up. The faceless man, who was beside her until last night, had vanished at some point. Furthermore, the ghost was also gone, and in its place was a wooden ornament modeled after the ghost [10].

The girl describes the situation of being left alone: "The coordinate had disappeared, but I remained." The "coordinate" here is a metaphor for the girl's (=Arawi's) thought process, where she unconsciously measured the distance between herself and other artists.

Until now, she had placed the existence of other artists as an axis, compared herself to them, and worried about her own originality. However, she shifted her mindset overnight, focusing on "how to keep myself." As a result, she stopped worrying about whether her work had originality by comparing her position to others.



From *Milestone*, page 16: The girl, left all alone, sets off on a solitary journey to become a manga artist.

The girl successfully removed the other artists from her mindscape. From another perspective, the girl was completely alone in this world. However, the loneliness here was not accompanied by the sense of isolation from not being understood by others, as depicted in *Hakoniwa* and *Hane*. Rather, it was filled with the sense of liberation to freely tackle anything by herself.

Arawi, in his early childhood, had once drawn freely in a corner of his room while listening to the sound of the rain. The girl in *Milestone* was savoring the refreshing feeling of returning to the mindset of his earliest memories, when he was absorbed in drawing alone.

In the end of the story, the girl lets out a loud laugh. This depiction expresses the joy of finding her true self, unswayed by others, and the solitude of walking the path to becoming a manga artist without mingling with anyone.

The work ends here, anticipating that the girl will continue her journey alone, yet freely, toward the place where the manga tools are located. Arawi himself also continued to walk the path to becoming a professional manga artist alone.

When I was participating in Comitia, I was side-by-side with loneliness. With that background, I feel that all the dōjinshi I drew in the past are cheering songs for myself. But in the end, creation is only born from loneliness, isn't it? [From an interview for this book]

That Is What I Want to Be

I would like to delve a little deeper into the origin of the title of this work, *Milestone*. As already pointed out, the word signifying an intermediate point or a major landmark event is undoubtedly the source of the title. However, another source of inspiration for Milestone can also be identified [11].

It is the essay *How Many Miles to the Graveyard?* by Shūji Terayama, whom we introduced earlier as an author who influenced Arawi. Terayama, who started as a tanka poet, also showed remarkable activity in the fields of theater and film, but he died suddenly at the age of 47. *How Many Miles to the Graveyard?* was the last text he left behind before his death.

In the free paper *shouwa. Ichi*, which Arawi published simultaneously with *Milestone*, he mentions *How Many Miles to the Graveyard?* Therefore, it is conceivable that the word "mile" used by Terayama influenced the title *Milestone*.

> ***Recently, some magazine featured a special on the late Shūji Terayama. No, I don't actually remember if it was a magazine or a passage from someone's essay, but it was definitely Terayama's words. No, even that is a bit vague, but anyway, there was a word that startled me [...]. Was it, "My will only needs to be the writings I've left behind"? Yeah, this is probably it. This phrase was a major premise for me when I drew pictures or made sculptures, so I was startled to think that someone else felt the same way.*** [From *shouwa. Ichi*, "shouwa. free magazine"]

Arawi states that he felt his own thoughts were perfectly articulated by Terayama's statement, "My will only needs to be the writings I've left behind." The passage referred to here is the concluding sentence of *How Many Miles to the Graveyard?*. Just before his death, Terayama wrote, "I will die of cirrhosis of the liver. That much is clear. But even so, I do not want a grave erected. My words are enough for my grave." And he concluded his life with this passage [12].

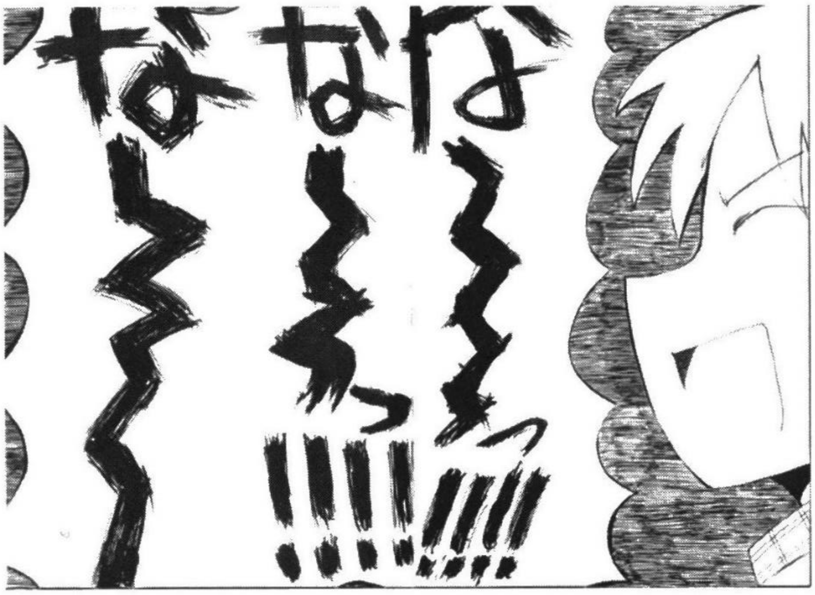
Reading *How Many Miles to the Graveyard?*, Terayama did not view a "grave" merely as a place to bury the deceased. He seems to have regarded it as a means of expression for the person about to die to assert their existence and not be forgotten by others. That is why Terayama, satisfied that he had poured his entire existence into his published works, firmly stated, "My words are enough for my grave."

In response, Arawi wanted to create a work that would serve as a "grave" like Terayama's—a manga where he could pour his entire existence and confidently say, "I exist here!" That is why he sympathized with Terayama's words, finding them "somehow cool."

> ***In reality, when I'm creating, I don't think even a tiny bit, "This is my will, yay!" But why do I make such a thing a major premise? Because it's somehow cool. It's just... I mean, it's somehow. "I exist here!" is somehow cool.*** [From *shouwa. Ichi*, "shouwa. free magazine"]

Milestone was a work that functioned as a grave in that sense. This is particularly evident in the final scene, where the girl struggles with comparing herself to other artists but finally gets over it, declaring, "The coordinate had disappeared, but I remained." Arawi drew the conclusion of the story to shout out his own existence: I exist here!

> ***Around this time, a few years after I started drawing manga, I felt like my body would melt if I didn't exhale what was inside me. It's an expression I don't even fully understand (laughs). The last scene of Milestone, in particular, may have expressed that.*** [From an interview for this book]



From *Milestone*, page 17-18.

Finally, I would like to conclude this chapter by quoting a poem related to *Milestone*. In the poem "Not Words, But Words" (コトバじゃないコトバ), which he published later, Arawi said the following about the milestones of beginnings and endings:

> ***If there is a beginning, there is an end, and vice versa. If the two points of contact are a temporary closure, let's put Kenji Miyazawa's Ame ni mo Makezu (Unbowed by the Rain) in that square. Then, perhaps, it will be a little cool. That is what I thought just a little today.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "Not Words, But Words" (コトバじゃないコトバ), August 10, 2007]

The point where the end of one thing overlaps with the beginning of another. This represented the situation of suspending his two-year activity of exhibiting at Comitia and preparing to submit manga manuscripts to publishers. At this juncture, Arawi proposes, "let's put Kenji Miyazawa's Ame ni mo Makezu." He thought that "Ame ni mo Makezu" was appropriate for the "temporary closure" of events.

"Ame ni mo Makezu" (雨ニモマケズ) was a draft memo for a posthumous work discovered after Kenji Miyazawa's death. The famous passage, which begins "Unbowed by the rain, Unbowed by the wind," was part of the concept memo for the posthumous work.

In addition, the poem "Ame ni mo Makezu" is known as a work that depicts the ideal human being Kenji Miyazawa wished to become. This is because the final lines of the poem conclude with: "Neither praised, Nor troubled, That is what I want to be."

In other words, Arawi likely believed that it was good to state one's ideal image at the point of contact between a beginning and an end. That is why he expressed the value that it is "a little cool" to declare an aspiration, That Is What I Want to Be, just before taking a new step, confessing, "I exist here!"

The feeling of "a little cool" has the same meaning as the feeling of "somehow cool" that he felt toward *How Many Miles to the Graveyard?* The creator strongly desired to confess, "I exist here!" and state the self they want to be when they arrived at the juncture of the end and the beginning of things.

Milestone, published at the juncture of the end of his self-produced manga and the beginning of his challenge to commercial manga magazines, strongly reflects the creator's ideal. It was completed as a work that fully asserted his past self and his future self.

And the aspiration he asserted in this work—the ideal he wanted to achieve—was the single wish: I want to be a professional manga artist. Toward this dream, Arawi would wholeheartedly run forward, truly "unbowed by the rain, unbowed by the wind."

---

[1]. In an earlier work, *Kokoro*, on page 6, a gigantic set of manga drawing tools was also depicted in the background. While not yet the central theme at this point, the aspiration

to become a professional manga artist and the expression of metaphorizing it with colossal drawing tools were already significant in Arawi's mind.

[2]. The ghost in *Helvetica Standard* "57" has an ashtray on its head to catch the cigarette butts smoked by the girl. Arawi himself was known to be a heavy smoker (though he quit after 2015), so a smoke-loving ghost was likely a reflection of his own preference. Furthermore, in the supplement "Nichijou Notebook 2012-2013" from the May 2012 issue of *Monthly Shōnen Ace*, it was named "Cigarettes Obake" and reappeared for the first time in about eight years alongside Sankaku from *Shiawase no Kakudo*.

[3]. In *Hirake!*, page 13, an illustration was drawn showing a single flower blooming at the foot of a girl taking her first step toward becoming an artist after abandoning her hesitation. Furthermore, in later years, in *CITY* Volume 13, page 138, a flower illustration is used for the first step taken by the junior high school student Matsuri after saying goodbye to her best friend.

[4]. Comparing this to the earlier work *Hakoniwa*, where the property agent recommended a sliding door connected to the world outside the mindscape to the girl, but the girl ignored his words. The girl in *Milestone*, who walks beyond the sliding door, can be interpreted as walking out into the external world in place of the girl in *Hakoniwa*, who had rejected others and withdrawn.

[5]. The kumomadori blog on October 7, 2006, included a comment about reading Ōji Suzuki: "I was going to reread *Garo* after a long time, but I disposed of it when I moved. Bummer. I'll buy it again in Nakano." Also, in Helvetica Standard "5," Arawi mentions going to a concert by the musician Masato Tomobe. Tomobe is known to be a close friend of Suzuki, suggesting that Arawi was influenced by Suzuki's manga to attend Tomobe's concert.

[6]. From kumomadori blog, May 19, 2006, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra 04" (ツァラトストラはかく語りき 04).The quote "It's eternal the day after tomorrow, isn't it?" from *Tokyo Goodbye* is found in a text written in the form of a book review by the fictional author John Mark Ware: *"usagi is dead!! The rabbit is dead. A cool, bipedal rabbit living in Ekoda, Tokyo. The first new work in three years and the final work by the genius John Mark Ware. Read with care!!" "Recommendation ★★★★☆ Review: I was surprised it was all manga, though I thought it was a novel. Tears at Sakasausegi's 'It's eternal the day after tomorrow, isn't it?' toward Cecily standing in the rain. I thought the way Mr. John makes you cry in this area is superb. I wanted to see more!! My deepest condolences."*

[7]. In the story of *Match Ippon no Hanashi*, the true identity of the boy who asks for a cigarette is suggested to be the peddler himself as a youth. Since his boyhood, the peddler had been possessed by the fantasy that "another self" existed far away, and he traveled to various places. When the peddler, who had spent his life traveling, lit his match as urged by the boy, he realized that the being he had been searching for all along was right in front of him. As mentioned earlier, the motif of "another self" that appeared in *Match Ippon no Hanashi* is deeply involved in Arawi's manga. However, as it is considered to have little relevance to the design of the faceless man character, it will not be pursued in depth in this text.

[8]. In *Milestone*, it can be inferred from the faceless man's dialogue that Arawi at the time had similar thoughts. The faceless man, who criticizes the girl, said, "I, too, am talking about not being able to catch a big fish in your territory." Conversely, this statement can be read as saying that one can "catch a big fish" within the territory of one's own mind. The assertion that "how to keep yourself" is important taught the importance of refining one's filter of sensibility, as obsessing over others yields little.

[9]. The faceless man sleeps in a camping sleeping bag, while the girl takes out a futon from somewhere and sleeps on it. The composition of one person sleeping in a sleeping bag and the other in a futon was self-homaged in *Nichijou* Volume 3, Chapter 51.

[10]. In Arawi's manga, the tree was a symbol of Arawi's own experience. Therefore, the scene where the ghost disappears and a wooden ornament of the ghost is placed in its stead is thought to contain the idea that the experience of meeting others remains, even after parting from them and becoming solitary.

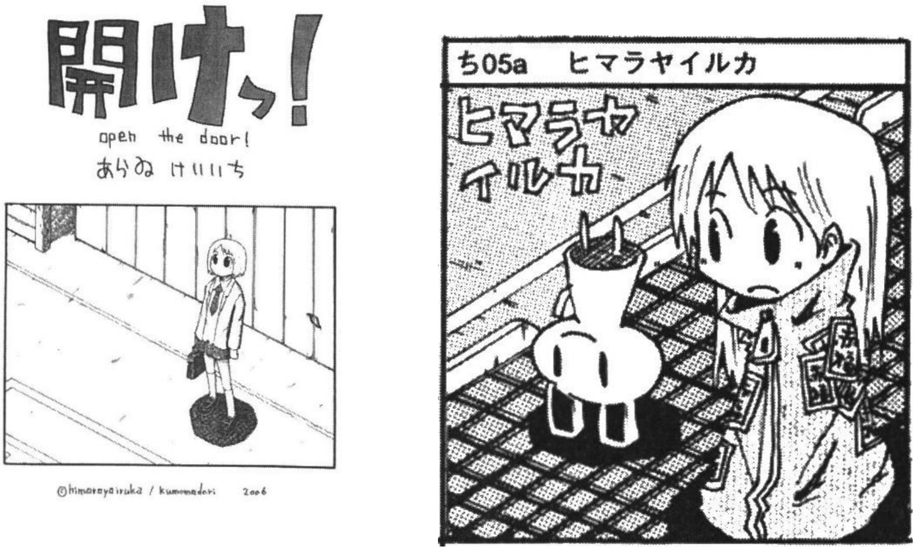
[11]. Besides *How Many Miles to the Graveyard?*, Miles Davis's "Milestones" (1958) can be cited as a source of inspiration for the title "Milestone." As discussed in the section "The Unknown Past is New" in this book, Arawi had begun seriously listening to jazz during this period. Naturally, he must have enjoyed the music of Miles, hailed as the "King of Modern Jazz," and been exposed to "Milestones." Therefore, the title Milestone is thought to have been taken from the sound of Miles's music. Incidentally, in the *Nichijou* Comic Tsūshin (コミック通信, November 2008 issue), Sakamoto has a line, "Miles Davis is rolling in his grave!!!" which is conscious of Miles Davis.

[12]. From *How Many Miles to the Graveyard?*, page 61. Note that Terayama, in this essay, states his cause of death as his chronic cirrhosis, but the actual cause of death was peritonitis that developed concurrently.

The Distance Between a Professional Manga Artist and Me #2: *Hirake!* (August 2006)

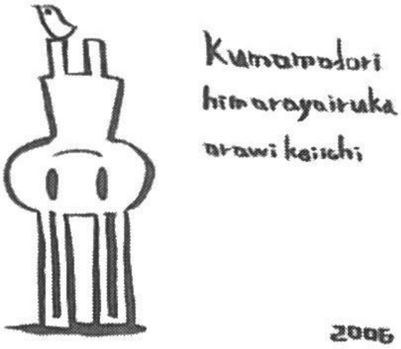
Hirake! (開けっ！, "Open It!," The official English title is *Open the Door!*)

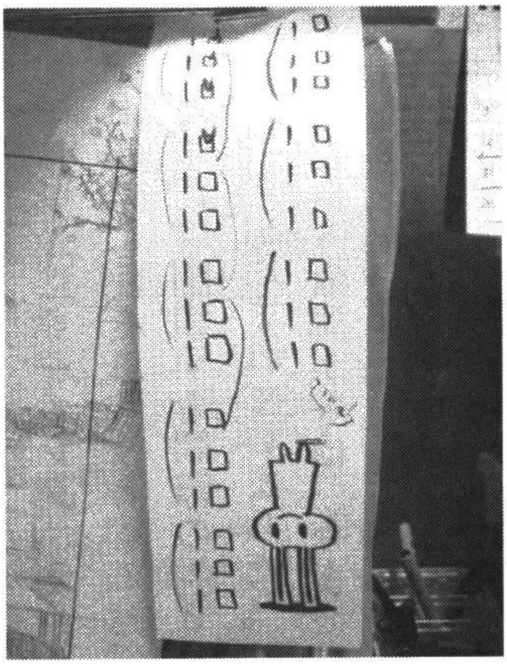
- August 27, 2006, at Comitia 77 (Circle Space F01b)
- Simultaneously published *Nichijou Bangai-hen: Hakase to Nano no Nichijou* (日常番外編はかせとなのの日常, "Nichijou Extra: Hakase and Nano's Ordinary Life").
- Offset printing, B5 size, 24 pages total, Circle Name: Himarayairuka, Byline: Arawi Keiichi
- Reprinted in *COMITIA 30th Chronicle* Volume 1 in 2014

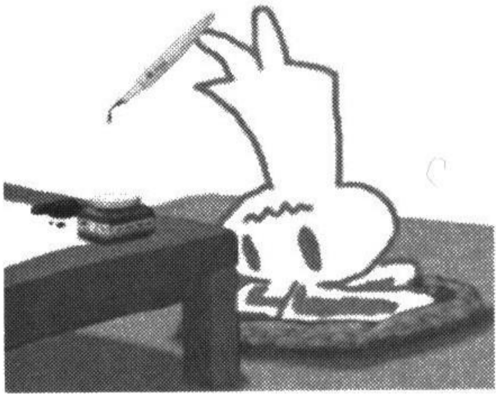

開けっ!
open the door!
あらゐ けいいち
©himarayairuka / kumomadori 2006
ち05a ヒマラヤイルカ
ヒマラヤイルカ

Left: *Hirake!* Cover

Right: Himarayairuka Circle Cut published in *Tia's Magazine 77.*







Top: *Hirake!* back cover illustration. This character is the "Sakasausagi" (さかさうさぎ, Upside-Down Rabbit) designed around this time.
Left: Photo published on the kumomadori blog on August 16, 2006, in "Striking Civilized Society" (文明社会の痛撃). In addition to the production schedule for *Hirake!*, an illustration of the Sakasausagi, which he was fond of drawing at the time, can be seen.
Right: Illustration published on the kumomadori blog on May 18, 2006, in "Thus Spoke Zarathustra 03." This Sakasausagi illustration was used as Arawi's second Twitter icon from 2011 to 2014. Incidentally, the first icon was an illustration of a mole sitting on Hakase's head (2009–2011), and the third icon is an illustration of his white bear-like self-portrait, "Aitsu" (2014–).

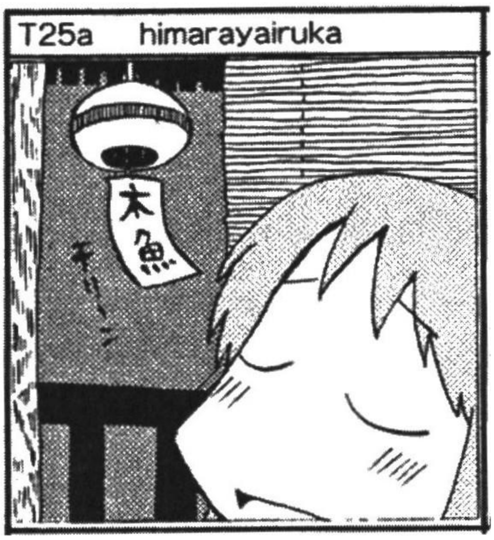
I Become a Professional Manga Artist, But...

On January 18, 2005, Arawi closed his website Himarayairuka and ceased publishing new illustrations and updating *Helvetica Standard*. This was the result of his decision to focus entirely on creating manuscripts to submit to publishers in his serious pursuit of becoming a professional manga artist.

We have already confirmed that he stopped exhibiting at Comitia after the publication of *Milestone*. However, it is also significant that he halted his online activities. We can read his commitment to dedicate all his time to drawing manga.

Incidentally, the Cornelius song "Thank You for the Music" was quoted on the Himarayairuka website right before its closure [1]. The lyrics, "Thank you for using your precious time for my worthless journey of fantasy," hint at his gratitude to the readers who had viewed his manga and illustrations. The following line, "I lightly wave and turn away, the past scenery flashes back, Bye Bye," was also a fitting passage for someone leaving a familiar place.

The closure of the website, which had been a valuable platform for publishing his work since its opening in September 2002, was swift and decisive. Arawi truly "lightly waved and turned away" from the online world. He then began the solitary work of drawing manuscripts for submission, known only to editors.



Himarayairuka circle cut published in *Tia's Magazine 71*. After the publication of *Milestone*, Arawi applied to participate in the next Comitia, held on February 20, 2005, but was absent on the day. He likely chose not to participate to concentrate on drawing the manga for submission to publishers.

Arawi had designated 2005 as his make-or-break year. He set an ultimatum for himself: if he could not debut in a commercial manga magazine within that year, he would give up the dream of becoming a manga artist and put down his pen.

Drawing manga was enjoyable, and he likely could have found some satisfaction continuing it as a hobby. However, his ambition to work professionally prevailed, and he earnestly began submitting his work to publishers.

> ***When aiming to be a manga artist, I decided that 2005 would be the year for submissions, and if it didn't work out, I would give up and continue working at the phototypesetting company. I managed to get published, but I was naturally worried about my livelihood, so I continued being a company employee for a while.*** [From "Young Artists Ask 'The Secret of Manga!'" on the *Jump SQ.* official website]

> ***I'll submit until the end of 2005, and if it doesn't work, I'll quit. [...] But since I love creating something, I probably would have continued doing something, whether it be a novel, sculpture, or even manga itself. And I would have aimed for that field, not just as a hobby. Is that what doing something means to me? Well, I'd have worked while secretly plotting. In that case, I'll retract "even manga itself." I wouldn't have done manga.*** [From "Arawi & Barubora Talk: 10 Randomly Chosen Songs"]

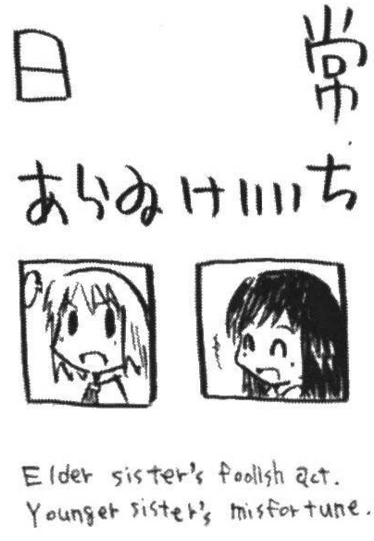
Arawi enthusiastically completed his manga and submitted the manuscript to the editorial department. The two works he wrote at this time were *Kazemachi*, a four-panel manga version of the style of *Helvetica Standard*, and a "moe four-panel manga" that he "consciously drew in a considerably relaxed way" [2]. However, he received no positive response from the publisher for either work and endured a period of frustration.

In January 2006, *Kazemachi* was published in Media Factory's magazine, *Comic Flapper*. At this moment, he achieved his long-cherished dream of debuting as a professional manga artist. *Kazemachi* was published for three consecutive months starting from the February 2006 issue, with the first chapter being 4 pages, the second 12 pages, and the third 6 pages.

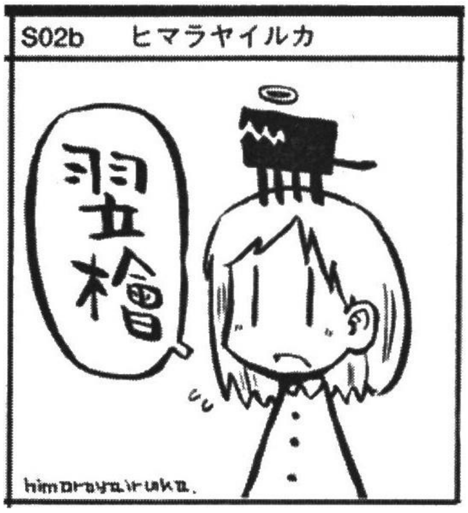
Having happily realized his dream, Arawi planned to participate in Comitia again, alongside the publication of *Kazemachi*, after a break of approximately one year. At Comitia 75 in February 2006, he unveiled his 8th self-produced manga, *Nichijou*.

This gag manga brought Arawi another turning point. In March of the same year, *Nichijou* won the Encouragement Prize in the 22nd Ace Newcomer Manga Award, which led to the publication of a one-shot manga of the same name in *Monthly Shōnen Ace* starting in May.

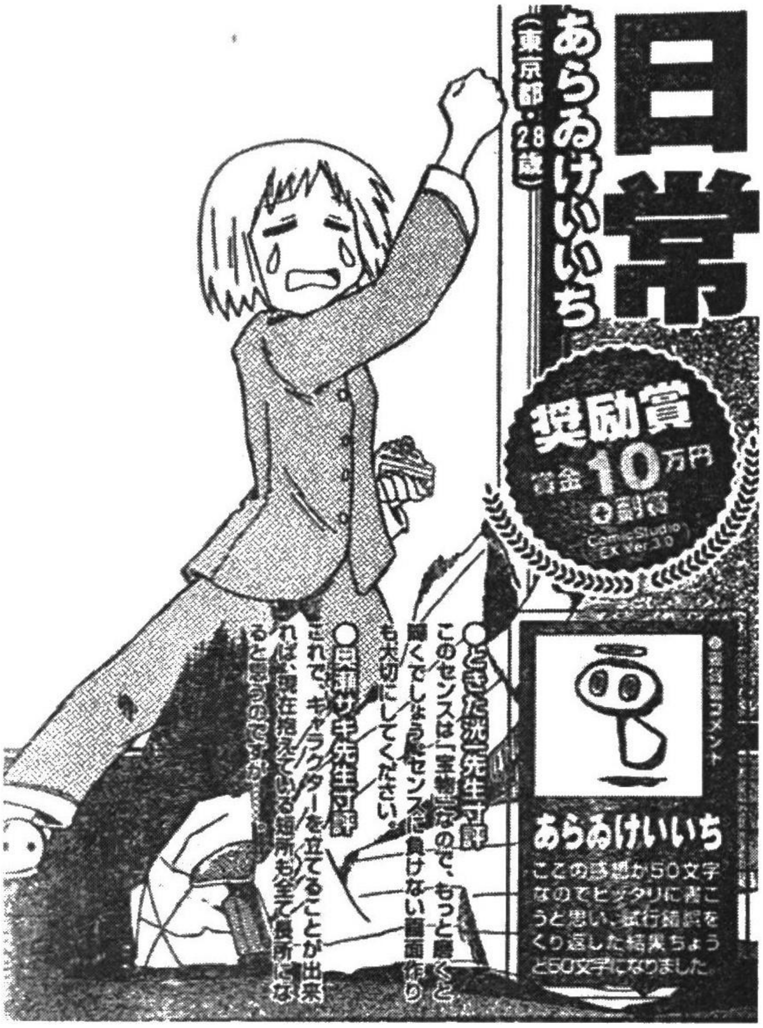
Nichijou itself was also published in the September 2006 issue of *Ace* and later reprinted as "Nichijou no Prototype 2" in *Nichijou* Volume 2.


日常
あらゐけいいち
Elder sister's foolish act.
Younger sister's misfortune.

Nichijou Cover


S02b ヒマラヤイルカ
翌檜
himarayairuka.

Himarayairuka Circle Cut published in *Tia's Magazine 75*.



日常

あらゐけいいち
（東京都・28歳）

奨励賞
賞金10万円
＋副賞
（ComicStudio EX Ver3.0）

●[illegible]コメント

あらゐけいいち
ここの感想が50文字なのでピッタリに書こうと思い、試行錯誤をくり返した結果ちょうど50文字になりました。

○ときた洸一先生寸評
このセンスは「宝物」なので、もっと磨くと輝くでしょう。センスに負けない画面作りも大切にしてください。

○貝瀬サキ先生寸評
これで、キャラクターを立てることが出来れば、現在抱えている短所も全て長所になると思うのですが…

From *Monthly Shōnen Ace*, May 2006 issue, special page for The 22nd Shōnen Ace Newcomer Manga Award Winners Announcement.

Thus, Arawi made a smooth start as a professional manga artist in 2006. He was steadily walking the path of a manga artist that he had resolved to follow in *Milestone*.

However, at the same time, new anxieties arose: the fear of the reader. In *Milestone*, the girl had expressed that she stopped comparing herself to other artists with the phrase "The coordinate had disappeared." This depiction represented the author's stance of creating manga without worrying about external influence.

Yet, even if he stopped comparing himself to other artists, he could not stop worrying about the readers. This is because, no matter how much passion he poured into his manuscript, his life as a professional manga artist would be cut short if he did not gain popularity from the readers. The publication of *Kazemachi* and the one-shot *Nichijou* in commercial magazines forced him to fluctuate between joy and sorrow based on reader reaction.

It must have been precisely because he was in such a distressing situation that Arawi decided to return to his roots at Comitia and draw a work unconstrained by the reader, just this once. Therefore, while drawing the one-shot version of *Nichijou*, he began the production of a "manga that follows my own inclination."

> ***Today was the Comitia deadline, so I completed the procedure. The circle name is, as always, Himarayairuka. I feel like drawing a manga that is "a manga that follows my own inclination" for the first time in a while.*** [From kumomadori blog, "All Humans are Made of Magic-Like Things" (人間はみんな、まじないッポイので出来ているのだ。), June 22, 2006]

And on August 27, at Comitia 77, he announced his new work, *Hirake!* [3]. As originally intended, this work closely resembled *Milestone* rather than his commercially published works like *Kazemachi* or *Nichijou*. The author's inner self was simply reflected in it.

To briefly recap, *Milestone* depicted the desire to become a professional manga artist through the figure of a girl stepping out toward the location of the manga tools. In contrast, Open the Door! expresses the anxieties that arose after becoming a professional manga artist, in the form of a girl struggling with her post-high school career path.

It's great to have become a professional manga artist, but what should I do next? Should I continue on the arduous creative path as a manga artist, or should I turn back? *Hirake!* suggested how Arawi resolved his own anxieties and the path he would follow, through the girl's decision. In that sense, this work can be called the second "Manga Michi Manga," following *Milestone*.

Now, let's move on to a detailed analysis of the conclusion that *Hirake!* led to.

The Melancholy of Summer Ending

The story of *Hirake!* begins with a high school senior girl (unnamed) agonizing over her future career path. With the end of summer vacation and the graduation season slowly approaching, she was forced to decide what she wanted to pursue.

What did she truly want to do? Get a job at a company, go to university, or explore another path? After some hesitation, the girl confesses her true desire: "I want to be a writer." She continues, "It's not that I want to make it my profession or anything... no, if it could become a job, I sometimes think, 'how wonderful that would be,'" but then she trails off.

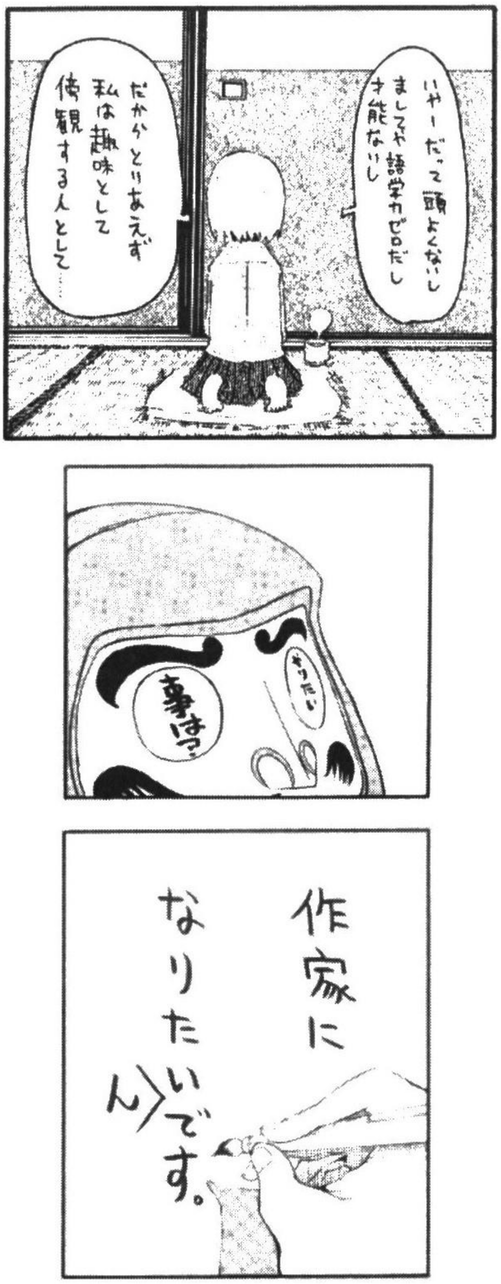
It is undeniable that the girl's conflict metaphorically represents Arawi's psychological state. If the girl's aspiration to be a novelist is replaced with a manga artist, this scene can be viewed as the author's confession.

Before 2006, Arawi had enjoyed creating freely, publishing works at Comitia and illustrations on Himarayairuka. Alternatively, he was engrossed in drawing manuscripts he believed were interesting, intending to submit them to publishers. Although there was the anxiety of not knowing if his dream would come true, viewed differently, he was able to draw manga freely.

In contrast, now that he was working as a professional manga artist, he had to keep drawing works in exchange for money from readers. It was easy to imagine that, as a job, it would be difficult and not always fun.

Of course, working in commercial manga magazines was a long-held aspiration and an honor he had finally grasped after endless struggle. Yet, the fact was that the thought of future creative activities led him to a melancholy mood.

The distressed girl expresses her resignation, hinting, "It's okay, I had fun doing it until now." Her conflict—wanting to be a writer but lacking the confidence to continue being one—was filled with Arawi's genuine feelings.


いやーだって頭よくないし
ましてや語学力ゼロだし
才能ないし
だからとりあえず
私は趣味として
傍観する人として……
やりたい
事はっ？
作家に
なりたいんです。

From *Hirake!*, page 5: The girl's self-questioning is depicted as the externalization of her inner mental image.

If I continue working as a professional manga artist, will the creative process become painful? I've achieved my goal of debuting in a commercial manga magazine, so should I be satisfied with this and give up the path of a manga artist? Arawi was not only savoring the joy of becoming a manga artist but also harboring pessimistic feelings.

Given this, the late summer season of this work seems to reflect the creator's state of mind. He likely set the stage for *Hirake!* at the end of summer vacation, likening the period of free creation to the summer break and the work in commercial manga magazines to the new school term [4].

> ***I feel like summer is ending in a flash. This summer will become that summer*** [5]
> [From a Twitter post on August 19, 2012]

After agonizing over her dream of becoming a writer, the girl delves into why she wants to be one. She recalls a past memory of being absorbed in reading books: "I spent most of my youth in middle school and high school in the library, and without making any friends I could call close, I just devoured books."

As has been mentioned several times, the root of Arawi's reason for reading manga and continuing to create lies in the sense of solitude he experienced during adolescence. In middle school, the awareness that he did not easily fit into groups and the desire to keep creating interesting things led him to immerse himself in reading manga and submitting postcards. The girl's feelings and words sincerely reflected the creator's state of mind.

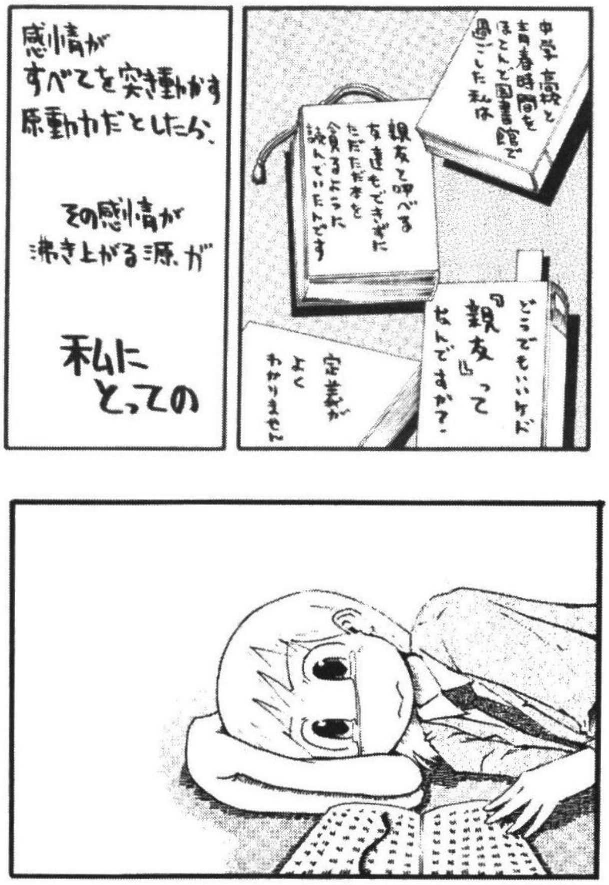
The girl's following recollection, "For someone like me who can't stick to anything for long, the only thing that remained when I noticed it was reading," also has Arawi's own early life in mind. It subtly suggested that, although he broadly pursued various interests like comedy, music, and skateboarding, the only thing he continued, if only looking at the results, was manga.

Through the depiction in the work, Arawi reveals his past, which was dormant deep in his heart, and reconfirms his present feeling that he loves books (manga). This was the most important point in the first half of *Hirake!*

However, at this point, he still had not found an answer to the anxiety of what to do after becoming a professional manga artist. To resolve this feeling, we need to consider the other reason why the girl in this work aspired to be a writer.

In Search of "Naked Emotions"

Arawi's aspiration to become a manga artist and his desire for his work to be read by the public stemmed from his longing for the profession and his affection for manga. However, in addition to these, *Hirake!* speaks of another crucial element: "naked emotions."


中学高校と青春時間をほとんど図書館で過ごした私は
親友と呼べる友達もできずにただただ本を貪るように読んでいたんです
どうでもいいケド『親友』ってなんですか？
定義がよくわかりません
感情がすべてを突き動かす原動力だとしたら、
その感情が沸き上がる源が
私にとっての

From *Hirake!*, page 7.

In the work, the girl explains the significance of reading: "If emotions are the driving force that moves everything, then books are the source from which those emotions well up for me." She also states her motivation for creation: "My ultimate goal in writing novels is to lay bare people's emotions."

This statement can also be interpreted as the author's declaration of intent if we replace "novel" with "manga." So, what exactly are these "welling up sources" and "naked" emotions?

The following passage from Himarayairuka provides a clue to understanding the girl's statement:

> ***There is a thing called the "naked emotion" of a human being. If you are told, "You're amazing," regarding that "naked emotion," you can rejoice without any mixing. And vice versa. That "naked emotion" is not covered by any clouded filter.*** [From Himarayairuka, "3," April 15, 2003]

A child, being new to the world, "can rejoice without any mixing" when told, "You're amazing." This is because they lack knowledge and experience. A child can only perceive things through emotion, not reason. Therefore, they can purely rejoice or mourn "without any mixing."

Conversely, as an adult, one loses the ability to perceive things in a pristine state or express emotions honestly. The acquisition of various knowledge meant the loss of the opportunity to experience the pure emotions one felt in childhood.

Arawi called the preconceptions that naturally settle in as one grows up a "clouded filter." He defined the bare, unfiltered sensibility of a child as "naked emotion."

The girl believes that "emotions are the driving force that moves everything" and thus idealizes the naked, unfiltered emotion. Arawi also holds a value system that places importance on emotion [7].

However, such pure emotion becomes harder to embrace with age. Arawi was likely aware that, as an adult, he was no longer able to purely accept experiences as he did in childhood.

Nevertheless, the work does not view the loss of naked emotion due to aging pessimistically. This is because he believes that it is possible to remove the "clouded filter" of preconceptions and lay bare emotions even after becoming an adult. The method for this is by tracing the "source from which emotions well up," or in other words, returning to the origin that awakens one's own emotions.

For the girl here, the experience of reading is the "source from which emotions well up." The girl was encouraged by her beloved books, consoled during her lonely youth, and occasionally brought to tears. Throughout her reading, she was continually experiencing naked emotion.

And through repeatedly welling up emotions via reading, a change occurred in the girl's (=Arawi's) mindset. Now, she wanted to "lay bare people's emotions" herself.

In his poem "Mighty," Arawi wrote, "I want to gain that empathy, and I want to give this empathy." What he wishes to share here is none other than the pure emotion that has driven him so powerfully.

> ***I want to gain that empathy, and I want to give this empathy. Regardless of the amplitude, regardless of the degree of transmission, generally, that's what I am.***
> [From Himarayairuka, "Mighty," December 12, 2007]

She wants to gain naked emotion from books. And she wants to convey that naked emotion to other readers and empathize with them through the works she draws. The essence of the reason the girl in *Hirake!*, and Arawi, wished to become a writer boiled down to this point.

However, the girl hesitates about the dream of becoming a writer. Despite genuinely wanting to pursue the dream, she loses the confidence to continue as a writer out of fear of the readers' eyes.

Regarding the reason for denying the writer's dream, the girl confesses her true feelings: "I'm afraid. I'm afraid of being betrayed by books. I'm afraid of my emotions being broken. That's why I want to remain a bystander."

Naked emotion was invaluable, and precisely because of that, it was something she didn't want to see harmed. Therefore, while she wanted to empathize with emotions and become a writer, she was simultaneously afraid of acting at all, fearing that her work might be exposed to the readers' eyes poorly. It goes without saying that this sentiment also existed in Arawi's heart.

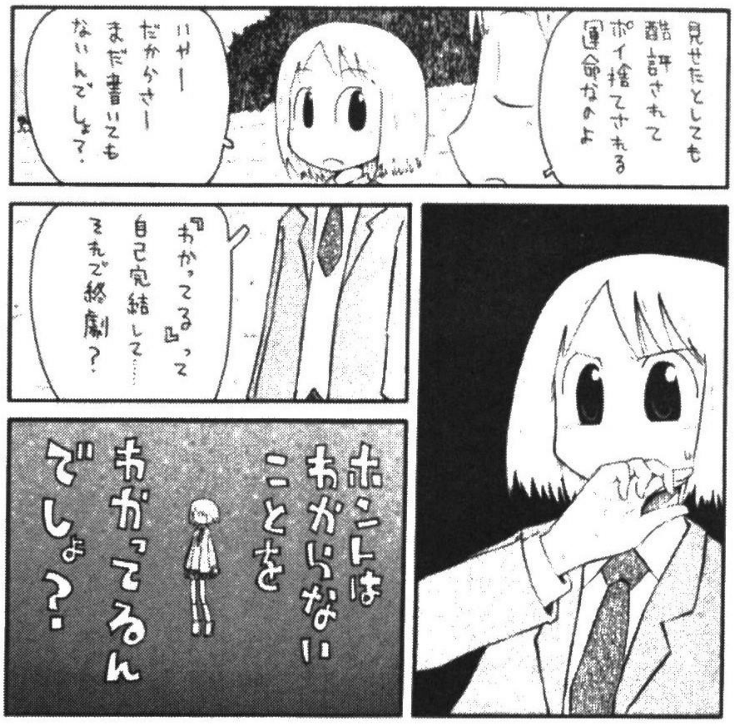
An Immense Distance is Just One Step

The girl favored reading because it allowed her to lay bare various emotions that were usually dormant. By engaging with the world of books, she eventually wanted to stir the emotions of others with the works she created. Thus, she aspired to become a professional writer and devote herself to creative activities.

However, the girl was terrified by the imagined scenario of her work being rejected by readers and her own emotions being hurt. So, she denied her seemingly earnest dream and acted carelessly, saying, "Who is going to read it, anyway?" and "Even if I showed it, it's destined to be severely criticized and tossed away."

How is this dilemma resolved? A major device was prepared in the work to save the girl's heart. In the middle of the story, her materialized true feelings suddenly appeared before the distressed girl.

By confronting this mysterious presence—the "other self" that had leaped out of her mental world—the girl faced her dream of becoming a writer head-on. Together with her other self, she set out to find the answer to whether she should pursue the writer's dream.


見せたとしても酷評されてポイ捨てされる運命なのよ
いやー だからさー まだ書いてもないんでしょ？
『わかってる』って自己完結して…… それで終劇？
ホントはわからないことをわかってるんでしょ？

From *Hirake!*, page 9.

The girl, who didn't want her true feelings to be hurt, expressed her vulnerability, saying, "I know, I know," that she would surely be poorly reviewed even if she became a professional writer.

In response, her materialized other self advocated for the dream the girl had been denying. It was true that even if she aimed to be a professional writer, she might be frustrated and unrecognized by anyone. Even if she succeeded, her work might be severely criticized, leading to hardship. But, that's something she couldn't know without actually trying.

The other self understood her fear of readers' reactions and her desire to run away from the dream. But one thing could not be overlooked: her pretense of "I know, I know." Because the truth was, "she knew that she didn't know."

The girl, having been hit where it hurt, retorted with defiance, "What's wrong with saying I don't know what I don't know?" The other girl was about to interject again, but the girl couldn't stand the one throwing logical arguments at her. Why should she cross such a risky bridge as becoming a writer when no one would take responsibility for her failure? The girl, exploding in anger, flared up, "Shut up! Given my status!"

However, the words that followed her shout were faint and almost inaudible. Having been cornered by her other self, she laid bare her true feelings: "Why do I have to run such an immense distance, a distance that might be wasted?" The girl, sinking into despair, shed a single tear.

In response, her other self smiled gently and replied, "Yes, that's also an answer. But you're wrong about one thing. That immense distance is just one step."

The path of a professional writer, which seems like an "immense distance," is actually "one step." Let's delve into the paradox stated by the other girl.

The girl had convinced herself that the journey to success as a writer was an "immense distance." The other girl acknowledged that if the definition of a writer was being recognized by a large number of readers, the distance between herself and a professional writer would indeed be endless.

However, the reason the girl wanted to be a writer was to allow someone else to experience naked emotion. She did not necessarily need to be accepted by the masses. If so, what she needed to focus on to achieve her dream was to not be swayed by readers and not lose sight of her own emotions.

The direction she should be walking toward her dream was not toward the crowd of others, but inward, toward her own heart. She should only concentrate on creating books that would be enjoyed, delighted in, and bring tears to "the self standing one step next to the work," not to someone who is an "immense distance" away. That is what the other girl was teaching her.

The girl, receiving the words, had an epiphany: "The source of emotion was next to the book—me." She then takes a step toward her other self, who had always been by her side. This action suggested that, having cut through her hesitation, she had reached a state of mind where she would write books that she herself could enjoy and would proceed confidently on the path to becoming a professional writer.

The materialization of the other girl in this work was likely to inform the distressed girl of the direction she should aim for. She unconsciously called out her other self as "the person I want to read my work the most," arguably, definitely.

And with the depiction of the girl walking toward her other self, Arawi also dispelled his anxieties about the readers. He could decide to draw manga, trusting his own emotions without being swayed by the evaluations of others.

The girl's—Arawi's—resolve at this time was also evident in the afterword to the compiled edition of *Helvetica Standard*. It states that thinking about what others want makes it impossible to know what to draw, but "thinking about what I want" makes things clearer.

> ***If you think about what others want, there are so many others, so you lose your way. But if you think about what I want, doesn't it seem possible? All that's left is to pray to some god somewhere. Well then, to some god somewhere. I'm counting on you.***
> [From the afterword to the compiled edition of *Helvetica Standard* [8]]

With *Hirake!* and the text of this afterword, Arawi completely mapped out his path toward becoming a professional manga artist.

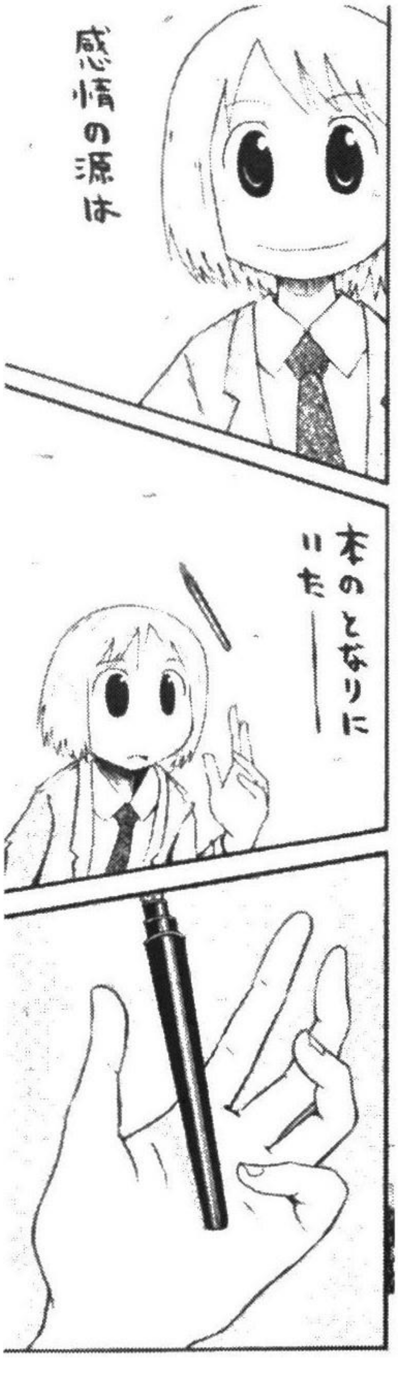
The End of Manga Set in the Mental World

The girl considered the path to becoming a professional writer an "immense distance," but in reality, it was not. The truth of her genuine desire and the real goal for a writer was simply to take "one step" toward her own emotions.

It didn't matter if she was not commercially successful or if she was criticized by others. The dream of a writer only required her to approach her own heart, and she didn't need to worry about anything else. Realizing this, the girl took a step toward the place where her other self was waiting. This depiction suggested that she had confidently chosen the future path of a writer.

And with the completion of *Hirake!*, Arawi, too, was freed from his hesitation. It is confirmed that he spurred himself on as a professional manga artist, saying, "Everything starts with one step. I'm going to do it!" [9]

Arawi published his self-reflective manga at Comitia: the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga," the "Kūkūjakujaku Manga," and the "Manga Michi Manga," which simply reflected his thoughts and feelings through the character of the girl. Although the specific theme varied with each work, the question of how to relate to others was consistently included. Let's look back once more at the process that led the series of Comitia works to *Hirake!*


感情の源は
本のとなりに
いた――

From *Hirake!*, page 13.

In *Hakoniwa*, the girl was withdrawn, alone in a space created by a box that could generate anything. The property agent, a symbol of others, intruded during the story, but the girl continued to ignore him and was ultimately seized by a profound sense of loneliness. In *Hane*, the worldview of *Hakoniwa* was reversed, setting the stage where others were imagining the girl's (self's) image within the mindscape. This imagery led to the conclusion of "accepting the voice" of others, allowing the girl to overcome the lonely feeling that the Hakoniwa girl had harbored.

In *Machi*, the theme of universal love was presented through a plot where all the main characters and non-essential beings found happiness. This ideology was the ultimate conclusion Arawi drew as an extension of accepting the existence of others in *Hane*. His stance of praying that love be shared with all people permeated Homare and his later commercial manga.

In *Kokoro*, by adopting a purely sensorial approach of drawing without thinking, a series of seemingly absurd events occurred. Yet, the theme that emerged in this world drawn through improvisation was the sadness of parting from others. The girl in the work was hurt by separation from others, but immediately after witnessing her own image as seen by others, she realized anew the importance of the existence of others for understanding herself.

Looking back this way, the "Jiko Tetsugaku Manga" from *Hakoniwa* to *Machi*, and the "Kūkūjakujaku Manga," led by *Kokoro*, were strongly colored by Arawi's interest in and anxiety about others. As a result, the stories consistently took the form of the girl, symbolizing the creator himself, confronting another entity, symbolizing others.

Meanwhile, in the "Manga Michi Manga" *Milestone*, the relationship between self and others was substituted with the self aspiring to be a manga artist and the other artists who influence the self. The mental state of seriously beginning to aim to be a professional manga artist was directly reflected in the manga.

Therefore, the girl in *Milestone*, unlike those in previous works, did not fear loneliness. To stand alone as a professional manga artist, she actively sought to separate herself from others (other artists). In the final scene of the work, the girl smiled serenely in a world where others had disappeared. This depiction implied that she had stopped comparing herself to others in her pursuit of becoming a professional manga artist.

And *Hirake!* entrusted the decision of whether or not to start working as a professional manga artist to a girl agonizing over her career path after high school graduation. The girl re-examined why she wanted to be a professional writer and realized that she wanted to create works to lay bare her own emotions, not to please others (readers). In the end, she wholeheartedly affirmed her dream of becoming a professional writer and walked the path she believed in.

With the completion of *Hirake!*, Arawi stopped agonizing over the sense of distance between himself and others. This is because he was able to establish his identity, believing that the person diligently moving forward as a professional manga artist was his "true self."

Consequently, there was no longer any need to further explore himself and others. As a matter of fact, since *Hirake!*, not a single self-published manga centered on the spiritual world has been created as of the present moment (2023).

Putting an end to the style of delving into his inner self was a change as significant as Arawi's move to commercial manga magazines, bidding farewell to his self-published works, once he became a professional manga artist.

However, there was no change in his attitude of trying to depict what he likes without compromise. In that sense, it can also be concluded that essentially nothing has changed. Continuing to create, guided by things he "somehow likes." This has been the manga artist's fundamental nature, unchanged from the past to the present.

> ***But really, if I don't do what I like, what kind of life is that?***
> ***Shall we do the Himarayairuka of the world?***
> [From Himarayairuka, "World," September 26, 2003]

The final scene of *Hirake!* includes a depiction of a single flower blooming around the girl as she takes her first step. This flower is believed to hold the same meaning as the one that appeared in the previous work, Milestone. That is, the blooming flower symbolized the sense of exhilaration at starting a new challenge and the joy of stepping into an unknown territory.

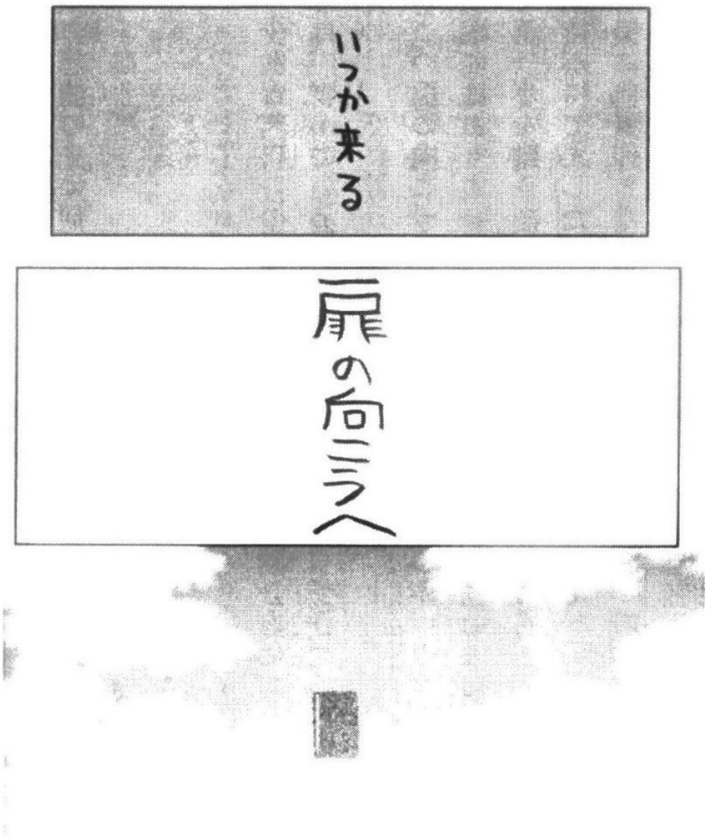
The girl then begins a monologue about her state of mind as she began the path to becoming a writer: "I wonder if my feet naturally moved forward because I realized that only I can move me. I think the reason I took another step without knowing it is because I entrusted myself to the first step." It is unnecessary to explain that these statements are also the words of Arawi when he began aiming to be a professional manga artist.

The girl's (=Arawi's) monologue continues: "In the end, 'Did I end up progressing?' is my thought, and 'I can't lie to myself,' is also my thought. If this is the case, I want to see what lies beyond this emotion, even if just a little. If you're curious, you have no choice but to go!!!"

The girl, honest to her emotions, continued her creative activities in the direction she desired. So, what awaits her on the path she has walked? What appeared at the end of *Hirake!* was a door floating in the sky [10].

Even for Arawi, who was drawing this work at the time, what awaited beyond this door was not yet clear. Nevertheless, there was a strange sense of anticipation that the new world spreading beyond the door—the new work of the creator who had taken his first step as a professional manga artist—held some incredible elements.

The moment for his representative work, *Nichijou*, to bloom was just around the corner.


いつか来る
扉の向こうへ

From *Hirake!*, page 16.

So, What Action Will "We" Take?

In May 2006, Arawi began publishing the one-shot gag manga *Nichijou* in *Monthly Shōnen Ace*. Nichijou was initially planned for a single publication, but its popularity led to it being featured in subsequent issues. After six consecutive one-shot chapters, formal serialization began in the January 2007 issue of *Ace*.

Immediately after receiving the announcement of *Nichijou*'s serialization, Arawi wrote about his pure joy on the kumomadori blog, which he had newly launched as the successor to Himarayairuka. Judging from this entry, he no longer had any hesitation about continuing the manga's serialization [11]. This was thanks to the resolution of his feelings about becoming a professional manga artist through *Hirake!*

It is interesting that, following the decision to serialize *Nichijou*, he published a poem that metaphorically expressed his state of mind. This poem, titled "The Door at the Farthest Reach" (最果てにある扉), featured terminology related to *Hirake!*

> ***"The Door at the Farthest Reach" Something is constantly running parallel, located to the upper right of my head. It is impossible to tell if it is guiding or being guided. Perhaps, that is completely absent, and it is merely running parallel...! Well, it's somewhere between running parallel and walking, and even if I try to name it "Run-Walk," no answer returns, at the farthest reach that is not the end, perhaps, yes, a certainty there, a smoke break.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "The Door at the Farthest Reach," August 10, 2007]

The "farthest reach" (saihate) in this poem refers to the serialization of his work in a commercial manga magazine, which he had been aiming for over many years. Arawi considered that, with the decision to serialize *Nichijou* and his true start as a professional manga artist, he had reached the "farthest reach."

However, the serialization in a manga magazine is also the start of a new journey as a professional manga artist. This is why he expresses it as the "farthest reach that is not the end."

> ***The pace up to that point, the streamlining that follows the flow, and occasionally, at the sidewalk, being mistaken by cheers directed at who-knows-who.***
>
> ***That's right, something that narrates myself in a different form, is all close at hand, and in our (first person) case, it is the increasing ash in the ashtray. The intersection, the focal point, where the truth of the farthest reach (a smoke break) and reality converge.***
> [From kumomadori blog, "The Door at the Farthest Reach," August 10, 2007]

Achieving the serialization of *Nichijou* is a definite accomplishment. On the other hand, three "mistakes" that a professional should be cautious of are listed, in a tone of self-admonition. First is the ego that he reached the professional level by taking a long path = the "pace up to that point." Second is the lack of core resolve to conform to the influence of other artists or trends = the "streamlining that follows the flow." And third is the mind that is swayed by the reactions from reader surveys = the "cheers directed at who-knows-who."

Arawi sensed that these "mistakes" would accompany him as he drew the serialized manga. Therefore, he preemptively told himself that the three points listed above were not essential.

So, what should Arawi rely on as he continues his work as a professional manga artist? The answer was already found in *Hirake!* The creator simply had to proceed single-mindedly toward the "other self" who would surely enjoy the work. This manga artist, who realized that the place to aim for was "all close at hand," no longer felt anxious.

> ***The farthest reach and reality link up. Not an answer to the question, but the truth. Reality calls back the door!***
> ***We (first person) and the upper right of the head. A voice, belonging to neither, whispers loudly. The doorknob shone silver. So, what action will we (first person) take?***
> [From kumomadori blog, "The Door at the Farthest Reach," August 10, 2007]

Hirake! concluded with the girl, who had stepped toward her other self, seeing a door floating in the sky. Arawi, too, in this poem, envisions a "door" appearing ahead as he progresses as a professional manga artist. The "intersection where the truth of the farthest reach and reality converge" expressed the way the girl depicted in the work and his own current reality overlapped.

"So, what action will we (first person) take?" The "we" here refers to Arawi himself and his other self, his true feelings. Although the action they take is not described in the poem, Arawi and his other self surely chose to open the door. The door at the farthest reach of his world is opened by "we" (first person) = the self and the other self. Here, too, the development of *Hirake!* is followed exactly. The answer to what awaits beyond the "door" is not yet clear. However, it might become apparent as he continues drawing the newly serialized Nichijou.

Another poem related to "The Door at the Farthest Reach" is "The Direction and Method of Walking" (歩いてく方向と方法), published in January 2007. This can be read as an aftermath to *Hirake!* and described the direction and method of walking for the girls who had firmed up their resolve to become professional writers.

> ***From our (first person) location, a small explosion at a place separated by approximately two million light-years. Vague, one-sided communication from the life forms generated from there, even if the examples are "Good morning" or "Good evening," we pay no mind and go to the neighborhood Sankus (convenience store) to buy cigarettes. Perhaps, that is conjecture, and the neighborhood agrees. If that is the principle, I suppose there's no choice but to enjoy life and die (lol). However, to sustain and continue the moment...***
> [From kumomadori blog, "The Direction and Method of Walking," January 28, 2007]

The poem states that even if a message flies in from a life form "separated by two million light-years," "we" (first person) will continue our daily lives without noticing. And it says the same is true for words from a stranger in the neighborhood, not even millions of light-years away. The value that one cannot understand others was expressed here once again.

However, the girl (=Arawi) no longer fears solitude. Rather, she accepts being the "first person" who keeps others at a distance, murmuring, "If that is the principle, I suppose there's no choice but to enjoy life and die." This indicated his firm resolve to solemnly continue the expression he desired as a professional manga artist.

Arawi will continue his creative activities from now on. He will collect many things he somehow likes and build his own unique world by incorporating them into his works.

While "Volume 1" of this book concludes here, the study of the manga artist Keiichi Arawi and his works will likely need to continue.

> ***How many things are there that I can definitively say, "This is it"?***
> ***Thinking about it, there weren't many, so I want to create a few.***
> ***I always want to do that act.***
> [From kumomadori blog, May 6, 2012]

---

[1]. In "My Favorites: My 3 Favorite Albums Vol. 96 Keiichi Arawi" published in the March 2017 issue of *Monthly Newtype*, there is a passage stating that he became obsessed with the album Doctor Head's World Tower by Flipper's Guitar, the band Keigo Oyamada (Cornelius) belonged to, during middle school. "I paid 3,000 yen (which felt like 60,000 yen to a middle schooler) to buy it, hoping to hear many pop songs like 'Koi to Machine Gun.' Strange, unknown voices came in, and the voices were fluffy, and an unfamiliar soft nightmare covered my body, and tears of regret overflowed. Yet, the feeling was imprinted by forcing myself to keep listening because I had paid a fortune. I became addicted to the pop sensibility I found within it." Furthermore, in the essay manga "Music and I #2 '90s'" published in the August 2016 issue of *Monthly Newtype*, a recollection is seen: "Flipper's Guitar casually became fundamental to me through middle school and high school."

[2]. In the early 2000s, with the success of *Azumanga Daioh* and the launch of the Hōbunsha manga magazine *Manga Time Kirara*, works depicting the gentle daily lives of girls (and occasionally boys) with cute art styles in a four-panel manga format were established as a genre. Arawi reacted to this trend and, alongside writing Kazemachi, completed a "Moe four-panel manga," as he mentioned in the interview for this book.

This "Moe four-panel manga" was also discussed in the interview "Wakate Sakka ga Kiku 'Manga no Gokui!,'' where he recalled that the experience of drawing it led to the Shinonome Laboratory stories in *Nichijou*. "It's quite difficult to adjust your manga to something else, especially gag manga. But I consciously tried drawing a considerably relaxed one once. That was a learning experience, and I thought, 'I see, so this is the feeling!' Indeed, there are many things you don't realize unless you draw them, and what I gained there became the prototype for the Shinonome Laboratory in *Nichijou*."

[3]. One month before writing *Hirake!*, Arawi was planning to publish the one-shot manga *Match* at Comitia. *Match* was a spontaneously drawn work, conscious of the atmosphere of shōjo (girls') manga. See kumomadori blog, July 17, 2006, "Match." "The direction is to draw the shōjo manga that I've been wanting to do for a long time. Moreover, with ink painting (no light ink) that I've also wanted to do for a long time. & No rough drafts. & No plot. It was a vibe like, 'Let's at least apply screentones.' It was a feeling of, 'What the heck is this! Ahahahaha,' and I just moved the brush on its own, and I had drawn 7 pages. Thinking about it that way, this would exceed 30 pages." However, as the concept for

Hirake! gradually grew in Arawi's mind, Match has not been published at Comitia to this day.

[4]. A simple reason for setting the stage of *Hirake!* at the end of summer could be that the work was published at the end of summer.

[5]. The phrase "This summer will become that summer" was the tagline for a 1993 TV commercial for Blendy instant coffee, sold by AGF. In a later work, *CITY*, Chapter 131, this line is quoted on a poster in the background.

[6]. Arawi published this entry after hearing the announcement of the production of a sequel to the *Mother* series. *Mother*, originally popular with its first work in 1989 and its second in 1994, had a third work (planned for Nintendo 64), but the project stalled due to development difficulties. On April 15, 2003, the restart of development was announced. Arawi was overjoyed upon hearing this news. His joy was intense, as he described experiencing "panic the moment I saw it," having "goosebumps all over," and feeling "tears well up," sending out emails of "mad ramblings" indiscriminately to friends and acquaintances. He reaffirmed that *Mother* was a game that was infinitely close to his "naked emotions."

"*Oh no, what should I do? I panicked the moment I saw it. With goosebumps all over my body, it was like, 'Wait, ah, wait? What should I do? Huh? What?' And at the same time, tears welled up. Just a few seconds, that much of a commercial had already surpassed Titanic. Returning to my senses, the first thing I thought was, 'I have to tell someone about this feeling.' Involving friends and acquaintances, I scribbled nonverbal words into an email and sent it. Firing it off without regard for impoliteness. That's right, mad ramblings. Yes, of course, I bought it. The GBA. The release date is still far away, but I don't care about that. It might have been one way to process this overwhelming emotion. I dare say it. The GBA is for this game. I expected it on the SFC, was betrayed on the 64, and then the GC... I never dreamed it would come out on the GBA. [...] That 'naked emotion' is not covered by any clouded filter, and the game infinitely closest to that existence is Mother. Now, the deeply sealed door has opened. A path has begun to float before my eyes. The time has come to touch that world again. To touch that music. I believe there will be no cancellation of production. Putting something into it from Magicant of that time.*"

[7]. For example, in *Hane*, the value that emotion is the core that forms the human spirit was mentioned. "Joy, anger, sorrow, pleasure...... These are actually the true world," and

"The thing you can understand in an incomprehensible world is that the world begins to turn by emotion," are stated in *Hane*. This also confirms that Arawi was certainly seeking naked emotion.

[8]. In episode 4 of the anime *Nichijou*, this phrase is quoted in a segment called "Hitokotowadokotoba."

[9]. See kumomadori blog, "Clapback Reply," September 1, 2008.

[10]. In Himarayairuka, August 2, 2003, "Yes," the lyrics of the Magokoro Brothers song "Great Adventure Family" were quoted. The lyrics, which make a straightforward assertion: "Force yourself to make known what you truly think / The time is already upon us," contain the line: "The door is already open for you." The idea that forcing yourself to make known what you think is the means to go beyond the door is shared with the story of *Hirake!*

[11]. See kumomadori blog, "Announcement and Restoration of Maebashi Town," October 26, 2006. *"I drew the one-shot version of Nichijou in today's issue of Shōnen Ace. I would be happy if you read it. And subtly fill out the survey. I would be even happier. I want to buy everyone a 50-yen stamp! I secretly ask for your favor! Or rather, it will be a serialization from the next issue. Eehhh!? In the comment at the end of the volume, I wrote that I wanted to eat eel ham. Well, let's let that go. It's a tightrope walk every time, or rather, I'm looking for the tightrope, but I hope to get through it with steps like crossing the Moon River, or so I think or don't think, while my health has been extremely poor recently, and my stomach is in trouble from drinking too much coffee, and time passes relentlessly. A clap would be auspicious if you wait a little longer. Anyway, please look favorably on Nichijou."*

Appendix and Notes

"Introduction to Self-Produced Manga Stories"
Introduces the plotlines of Arawi's early manga works, which are currently difficult to obtain.

"List of Major Works That Influenced Arawi"
Lists the source information for the creative works that influenced Arawi.

"Sources for the Main Text"
Lists the source information for Arawi's creative works, interview articles, and other materials mentioned in the main text.

"Keiichi Arawi Activity Chronicle"
Lists Arawi's background, career, and published creative works in a chronological table format.

Introduction to Self-Produced Manga Stories

Tartaru Bōkenki (タルタル冒険記, "Tarutaru Adventure Chronicle")

- Published December 2002

◆ Guest contribution to the doujin manga anthology based on the video game *Final Fantasy XI*.

Party De Aru Koto (パーティーである事, "The Act of Being a Party")
A party of three adventurers is engaged in combat with an enemy character. The Elvaan (a race with an elven appearance but skilled in swordsmanship) female bravely charges the enemy, continuing a back-and-forth battle.

The remaining two, however, don't move an inch, let alone fight. The Hume (a race closely resembling humans) girl, Yukimida, is currently unable to participate in the fight as she is in the middle of casting a long spell. Pino, a Tarutaru (a small race skilled in magic) girl, is even taking a nap despite the ongoing battle.

The Elvaan female defeats the enemy after a fierce struggle. Yet, only Pino and Yukimida, who did not directly participate in the combat, gain a level, while no growth occurs for her. The woman forces a strained smile at the unfair result.

Yukimida no Shiro Mahō (雪見田の白魔法, "Yukimida's White Magic")
Yukimida spends an entire page chanting words of prayer to activate her magic. She then attempts to use the healing White Magic spell Cure but mistakenly restores the health of the enemy character they are facing.

Pino no Sanpo (ピノの散歩, "Pino's Walk")
A Quadav, a beastman monster with a shell on its back, attacks Pino, who is taking a leisurely stroll. However, the attacks repeatedly miss Pino.

Pino pays no mind to the enemy's attacks and continues walking at her own pace, with the Quadav chasing her. The confrontation takes on the appearance of an endless game of tag, but upon seeing Pino maintain her composure even after tripping over a stone, the Quadav finally gives up the fight out of frustration.

Shiawase no Kakudo (幸せの角度, "The Angle of Happiness") - Published February 2003

◆A story about angels whose job, called "Tengoku Okuri" (Heavenly Dispatch), is to escort humans who have reached the end of their lifespan to the heavens.

The Angle of Happiness: 1 Degree (幸せの角度 １度)

The angel girl, Pino, was being scolded by her overseer, Sankaku. This was because she had spent a large sum of money buying Fukkokku Bikkuriman (Reissue Bikkuriman) stickers, even though their living funds were running low. Pino had descended to the mortal world with an angelic mission, but she had since completely fallen into a decadent lifestyle.

Sankaku, whose name suggests his conical body and single eye, was fuming and listing off complaints. However, Pino showed no sign of remorse. Worse yet, she tried to change the subject, saying, "Don't grumble."

While Pino was seemingly unaffected by Sankaku's scolding, the next moment, she cried out, "Yesterday, Old Man Kikuchi's lifespan was up..." Pino had completely forgotten and neglected the job assigned to the angels.

The heaven in this world operates on a piece-rate system, where wages are paid each time they perform a "Heavenly Dispatch" to escort a dead person's soul to heaven. Therefore, neglecting the delivery means no salary is paid. Sankaku was furious at Pino for wasting money and missing work, and even the cheerful Pino showed some reflection.

"That's why I tell you every time, Lady Pino should be more planned! What are you going to do? What about our life from now on?!" Sankaku, at the end of his patience, bellowed. However, Sankaku had left the plastic bag containing groceries he bought at the nearby supermarket on the ground. Consequently, a stray dog passing by ransacked the bag, and all the food inside was eaten.

The plastic bag was empty, and Pino and Sankaku had lost their dinner for the day.

The Angle of Happiness: 2 Degree (幸せの角度２度)

Pino, who lived in a makeshift tent, had changed into her nightwear, spread out her futon, and gone to sleep, enduring her hunger. Sankaku, on the other hand, was skillfully folding his conical body to turn the pages of the Heart Sutra (Hannya Shingyō). Sankaku suddenly noticed Pino standing behind him, looking sleepy.

"Do you need to use the restroom?" Sankaku asked. However, her state was clearly unnatural. In fact, Pino, whose hunger had reached its peak, was trying to eat Sankaku in her sleepwalking state.

Pino, in a dreamlike daze, took a bite out of Sankaku. Sankaku narrowly dodged her and ran around inside the tent.

Pino woke up a while later, remembering nothing of the violent act she committed in her sleep. Sankaku, who had been running all night and had a close call, grumbled about Pino, who was supposed to be an angel: "(You're... already... a devil...)"

The Angle of Happiness: 3 Degree (幸せの角度 3度,)

A month passed since the "Heavenly Dispatch" jobs stopped arriving. Sankaku lamented that all his savings had been "Heavenly Dispatched." He also recalled the numerous times Pino had gnawed at the tip of his triangular body and became depressed.

(I severely regret becoming Lady Pino's overseer... but regretting it won't change the current situation. I want her to complete many requests, quickly get promoted to a higher position, and say goodbye to this poverty as soon as possible...)

While Sankaku was worrying about their future, Pino was attempting to eat an ant she found crawling nearby as breakfast. Sankaku was utterly exasperated by Pino, who proudly said, "I caught a big one," and wished, "I wish you would at least be a little discouraged by this situation..."

Just then, a request for a "Heavenly Dispatch" job finally arrived. Pino and Sankaku rushed to the location where the soul of the deceased was waiting. However, upon arriving at the scene, they were informed of a sad truth by Yuki, Pino's junior, a Second-Class Angel. The lifespan of the human who was scheduled to die today had been extended by two years, and the job was canceled.

"Well, nothing we can do about that," Pino smiled cheerfully. Meanwhile, Sankaku, who had lost his source of income, made a pun—"It was Nobita for two years" (a play on nobita, meaning "extended," and the *Doraemon* character Nobita)—and fainted.

The Angle of Happiness: 4 Degree (幸せの角度 4度)

With no work and free time, Pino invited Yuki to her makeshift tent home.

"There's nothing here, but make yourself at home," Pino kindly told her junior, trying her best to be a good host. Pino then offered Yuki the leftover meal from this morning: a plate of dead ants.

Yuki flinched at the sight of the ants piled high on the large dish. However, thinking she shouldn't disregard her senior's kindness, she bravely put an ant in her mouth. As expected, she couldn't comment on the taste and could only make a grim face.

"It leaves a bit of skin, but it's an unexpected delicacy, right?" Pino asked with an innocent expression. Faced with such a naturally carefree senior, Yuki had no choice but to agree. Sweating nervously, Yuki replied, "Yes."

The Angle of Happiness: 5 Degree (幸せの角度 5度)

More time had passed since Pino stopped receiving "Heavenly Dispatch" jobs. However, her easygoing lifestyle remained unchanged; this time, she was trying to earn a living by selling her drawings on the street. Sankaku, meanwhile, was desperately trying to catch pigeons in the park to get food.

The diligent Yuki, on the other hand, was constantly receiving "Heavenly Dispatch" jobs and was escorting an elderly soul to heaven even today.

In the end, none of Pino's drawings sold, and Sankaku failed to catch any pigeons. They still couldn't get a decent meal and remained hungry.

It was then that Yuki, who visited their makeshift tent for the first time in a while, offered Pino and Sankaku some " Tabekko Dōbutsu Biscuits."

Pino, Sankaku, and Yuki each had different values, and their lifestyles were all unique. However, for a brief moment, the hearts of the three connected. While sitting around the low table and munching on the biscuits Yuki brought, they all wore equally happy expressions.

Hakoniwa (箱庭, "Miniature Garden") - Published May 2003

◆Three fables concerning a mysterious "Box" that grants any wish and a "Girl."

Desire-Success (欲望-成功)
A girl sits on the eaves of a shaved ice stand, bored. Around the shaved ice stand, there is nothing else but the distant horizon. Not just sparse, an unusual space literally containing nothing surrounded them."There's nothing here," the girl mutters."There is not," the square box placed next to the girl agrees.

However, the Box continues to explain that this empty space was desired by the girl herself, who ordered the Box to create it. When the Box points out, "This is the world you wished for," the girl looks embarrassed.

Sensing her mood, the Box changes the subject and proposes, "I shall produce something for your amusement." The Box could use its mysterious power to generate any object.

The girl jumps at the Box's proposal with delight. However, what the Box produces is not what the girl wanted, but a gigantic whale. The disappointed girl gets angry and kicks the Box.

"If you're going to produce something, make it something more thoughtful," the girl sighs and says. In response, the Box replies with cryptic words: "Yet, this too, was something you wished for."

Influence≧Rejection (影響≧拒否)
Some time later. In the nonexistent space containing nothing but the shaved ice stand and the gigantic whale, the girl's eyes sparkle. The Box was about to use its mysterious power again to create something in this place.

(I'd be happiest if it could produce Ueno or Ikebukuro... no, wait, before anything else, Takenoko no Sato [chocolate snack shaped like bamboo shoots], yeah. I'd like a year's supply, if possible.) Her heart beats, certain that a wonderful item will appear this time.

However, what appears before her is a mug of coffee with milk on the side. Once again, the Box did not produce the item she expected.

The disappointed girl points at the coffee and says coldly, "Make it disappear." Then, the coffee in the mug begins to speak hurriedly. Strangely, the coffee produced by the Box had a personality.

"I can change you both," the coffee declared that it could fulfill the girl's desires. But the girl did not listen at all.

Ignored and feeling awkward, the coffee reluctantly pours the milk into the mug container it occupies. The black of the coffee and the white of the milk mingle, creating a beautiful swirling pattern on the surface.

The next moment, a vision of another world, where strange creatures richly populated, appeared inside the mug. The coffee was trying to create various forms of life in the empty world created by the Box.

However, the coffee's existence was still not acknowledged. The girl did not retract her statement, and the Box, as instructed, made the mug disappear from the space.

The place where the mug had been was now completely empty. The coffee and the life forms the coffee had created vanished entirely, and the space stretched out, containing nothing but the shaved ice stand and the gigantic whale, just as it had been a moment earlier.

No, to be precise, a small puddle of coffee, perhaps spilled from the mug, remained. When the girl and the Box looked closely, a single new shoot timidly poked its head out of the coffee splatter.

Miniature Garden (箱庭)

A little girl with pigtails bursts in, giving a casual greeting: "Hi~." The little girl introduces herself as a property agent (bukken-shi) and continues to explain that she wants to sell them her best property.

"Another weird one has come," the girl glares at the Box.

She suspected the Box had summoned her, just like the gigantic whale or the talking mug of coffee. However, the Box had no recollection this time.

This world was supposed to contain nothing but what the Box created, and no one but the girl. Yet, the property agent suddenly appeared before them. The girl and the Box eyed the unknown entity with suspicion.

Meanwhile, the property agent, with a salesman-like smile, began to state her business. She wanted to sell a sliding door. This fusuma was a special item that would allow the girl to escape to the outside of the empty space she was currently in.

Indeed, for the girl who was idling away her time in this empty world, the property agent's sliding door seemed like a useful item. But the girl, as usual, did not listen to the offer. Worse yet, she lay down, using the Box as a pillow, and fell asleep.

The property agent, having lost heart, couldn't sell anything after all. However, with a carefree attitude, saying, "Oh well," she left the area. The girl, still lying down, watched with a complicated expression as the little girl opened the sliding door and stepped out into the outside world.

Finally, one important fact is revealed. The empty place where the girl and the Box were confined stretched out to the horizon from the girl's perspective, but from the property agent's perspective, it was only the size of a hut.

This space was actually a "Miniature Garden." The girl had wished the Box, which could create anything, to make a "fake world where there is no one and nothing," and she had been withdrawn inside it all along.

Hane (はね, "Wings") - Published August 2003

◆ A story in which a girl who suddenly wanders into an irrational world arrives at the truth of her own identity and the world.

As the girl walks and chats with her friend, Kiri-chan, she witnesses a strange sight: her own younger self is standing ahead. The girl is bewildered, but the illusion before her is only the beginning of the inexplicable events to follow.

First, Kiri-chan, walking beside her, bumps into a wall without noticing the dead end, and smoke billows from her head. Next, a ghost wearing a safari hat appears, takes a cup from its pocket, and hands it to the childhood version of the girl.

The confused girl tries to turn back, but the path she walked on is somehow blocked by wooden boards. Then, Kiri-chan, who was next to her a moment ago, vanishes along with her past self and the ghost.

Faced with a series of events lacking reality, the girl is left speechless. The wooden boards blocking her way have somehow surrounded her entirely. Trapped in the spot, the girl lets out a voiceless cry.

The girl stood still for a long time, unable to comprehend the situation. Then, the ghost who had handed the cup to her younger self reappeared. The ghost began to speak, preempting her questions.

"Are you not about to ask the question, 'Who are you?' Are you not about to ask the question, 'Where is this place?'"

The girl had many questions. But the ghost dampened her spirit by speaking words that seemed to read her mind.

The ghost rapidly listed the words the girl would have likely uttered: " 'Why am I trapped?' 'Why didn't my friend notice the wall?' 'Why was my past self here?' 'And what was handed to her?' 'What will happen to me now?' "

The girl, confused by everything, could only listen to the ghost's words. "Or perhaps, are you not thinking, 'This is not reality; it's a dream?'"

Indeed, if she considered she was having a disjointed dream, the series of events would make sense. The girl was about to be convinced, but the ghost suggested, "This is not a world of dreams."

The girl demanded an answer, but the ghost did not give her a clear explanation. Instead, it began a philosophical speech.

To summarize the ghost's words: Human perception is limited; everyone can only measure things by their own standards. However, many people forget these limits and subconsciously believe they possess the correct view of things. Such people, who cannot imagine others' thoughts and believe only their own are correct, live in a truly closed world. In Buddhist terms, they are trapped in the world of Klesha (defilement/affliction).

After presenting its thought, the ghost threw a phrase that held the key to solving the current inexplicable situation: "Are you not thinking that the world you perceive is the entirety of the world?" But the girl could not grasp the true meaning.

Just as she was about to ponder the ghost's words, another inexplicable event occurred. A pair of wings suddenly sprouted from the girl's back.

The wings lifted her body, and the flying girl looked down from the sky at the wooden boards that had trapped her moments before. The area enclosed by the boards was suddenly overgrown with a massive amount of plants for a brief moment, only to disappear the next.

Her mind couldn't keep up with these events, but the ghost continued to whisper, "There is nothing strange about this."

Eventually, the girl lost her wings and fell from the sky, but even when she hit the ground hard, she felt no pain. "This, too, is not strange," the ghost explained.

A world where a sequence of irrational events occurs, and they are all explained as being completely normal. A world where absurd events continue, like in a sleeping dream, yet is distinctly different from a dream. Finally, to the girl who could not find the answer, the ghost revealed the truth.

"The entirety of the world I can conceive of is the entirety of you. Because this is your world within me."

This space was the mental world inside the ghost. The inexplicable events occurring around the girl were because the ghost was imagining the girl's figure in its mind and freely expanding its fantasies.

The truth the ghost revealed meant that the girl was not a real girl. The girl, who had been tossed around in this world, was merely the image (mental picture) the ghost had envisioned.

The girl, upon hearing the truth, froze, unable to move. Perhaps due to the immense shock, a large amount of sweat poured from her forehead. This sweat gathered into a cup that had somehow been placed on the ground.

Although it was a surreal sight, nothing was strange now that she knew the true nature of this world. The scene where the sweat jumped into the cup was occurring in this world because the ghost was imagining it.

The ghost then developed its imagination and recreated a crucial event for the girl within the mental world.

First, Kiri-chan, whose whereabouts were unknown, reappeared. Kiri-chan didn't even glance at the girl; she picked up the cup where the sweat had just gathered and drank it down eagerly. Next, as Kiri-chan sighed after drinking the cup, the sigh transformed into a halo, like the one worn by angels.

Although the girl couldn't grasp the situation, she felt a premonition and reached out her hand toward Kiri-chan. However, Kiri-chan's body was already high up in the unreachable sky. Kiri-chan, with the halo on her head, had ascended to heaven.

The sequence of events the ghost imagined was sufficient to deduce what had happened in reality. Kiri-chan had already passed away in the real world; they had been separated by death. As a result, the ghost recreated the reality where the girl had to suddenly part with her friend within the mental world.

The girl realized the truth of this world: that her existence was the product of an image seen through someone else's consciousness, and that she was reliving her separation from Kiri-chan within someone else's mental world. She began a monologue, profusely sweating:

(The me reflected in others is not the real me. Others think they know my whole self based on a slight gesture, appearance, or spoken word. Others believe the false me I created is the real me. How sad it is if that is all a person is. One's life will end without anyone truly knowing who I am.)

The feeling the girl acutely sensed was loneliness. She realized that her life would end without her true self ever being known to anyone, and without her being able to know anything about others.

However, without becoming pessimistic, the girl set a guiding principle for her future self. It was the stance of listening to the words spoken by the person in front of her, even if she was merely an image conceived by others.

(That's why I thought, your voice—I will accept that voice.) Once again, the girl profusely sweated from her forehead. The sweat had gathered in the cup earlier, but this time, the volume was too great to fit inside. The sweat flew high into the sky of the ghost's mental world, traveling everywhere.

The girl's sweat circulated through the mental world and returned to the place where she was. As the sweat soaring high in the sky returned to the same spot, the girl and the ghost were shaking hands on the ground.

Machi (街, "Town") - Published November 2003

◆ A story about a girl in love with a robot, a god who grants any wish, and a nameless young man and the Grim Reaper—a tale of unique individuals who find themselves in the same place.

A girl was trying to hand over a love letter to confess her feelings to her beloved Senpai (senior). Senpai was not human but a round-bodied, two-heads-tall robot, but no one could stop her love.

The girl made up her mind, stood before Senpai, bowed her head, and presented the love letter, saying, "Please accept this!"

However, Senpai did not take the love letter handed to him and simply stared at her with a bewildered look. The girl's eyes watered, and she slumped her shoulders, thinking, (Did I get rejected...?)

But the next moment, an unexpected event occurred. A little girl, who had been nowhere to be seen, suddenly appeared right in front of the girl.

The little girl, with long hair tied in pigtails, was wearing a robe with excessively long sleeves and floating in mid-air. Clearly no ordinary being, she introduced herself as a "God." It seemed the girl's prayer, "God, please let me date Senpai," had caused a real God to descend.

The girl's eyes sparkled at the sudden appearance of God, while Senpai was so startled he lost his footing and flipped over.

At the same time, a young man who had been observing the whole event from afar in the shadows yelled out, "Who the hell are you!!" toward the God who had abruptly appeared. The girl felt like asking the young man, "Who the hell are you too," but he continued to mutter his own thoughts regardless.

After learning that the other party was God, the man decided he wanted to make use of their "superior abilities that no ordinary person can achieve" and asked for the wish, "Make cola come out of the water faucet," to be granted.

However, the young man's wish was not granted. The Grim Reaper, who had descended to Earth with God, cautioned, "You shouldn't do that."

The story then detoured from the interaction between the girl and Senpai and shifted entirely to the exchange between the young man and the Grim Reaper, which had nothing to do with the main plot.

The young man, in fact, had never had a name since he was born. So, he posed the question concerning his identity, "Then who am I!!" The Grim Reaper countered by suggesting the name of a flower from the Amaryllis family, "How about Hamayū?"

Upon learning that the language of the Hamayū (Spider Lily) flower is "to somewhere far away," the young man liked the new name, saying, "That's so wonderful!" Thus, the young man, now Hamayū, acquired a name to call himself for the very first time.

After the exchange between Hamayuu and the Grim Reaper subsided, the focus of the story returned to the girls.

The girl asked God, "I want Senpai to read this letter... can you do that!?" God readily agreed, saying, "That is a very simple thing!" but simultaneously gave a strange prophecy: "But you will become groggy from waking up and be dizzy."

Receiving the oracle, the girl fantasized about the Dokidoki Dai Sakusen (Heart-Pounding Grand Operation) commencing, where her groggy, unsteady self would tumble into Senpai's side, and she would become Senpai's bride. "Please make me his bride," the girl declared forcefully to God.

"Understood. Then, here we go!" God held out their hands, creating a huge ball of light, often seen in psychic battle manga. Then, at a signal from the Grim Reaper, who had somehow come next to God, they launched the ball of light at Senpai.

The destructive power of the light ball was tremendous, and the entire area was engulfed in a blast. Senpai was sent flying into the air, wrapped in a brilliant flash.

Overwhelmed by the unexpected event, Senpai, soaring through the air, dazedly looked at the sky. The next moment, the sight of the girl in her pajamas, sleeping, jumped into his eyes. God had indeed exercised their mysterious power: after completely blowing away the existing world with the light ball, they re-created a world where Senpai and the girl could be alone together.

Meanwhile, the girl was dozing off in the re-created world. She woke up when she collided with Senpai, who had been thrown from the original world.

"I was having such a nice nap..." The girl was initially grumpy, but when she realized the person she bumped into was Senpai, who had been blown away by the blast, she remembered God's prophecy. As she wished, the girl was now sleeping beside Senpai.

Her wish fulfilled, the girl offered her gratitude to the heavens, "Thank you, God." God, having heard her words, ascended back to heaven with the Grim Reaper.

Helvetica Standard Chapters 1–17 (Published March–May 2004)

◆ An omnibus-style story created from the author's free ideas, featuring essays that humorously depict daily life and gags based on irrational concepts.

Helvetica Standard (Cover Illustration)
An illustration of the girl professor who appears in Chapter 8.

Helvetica Standard 1
Main Story 1: Arawi experienced a minor accident while drawing manga. The tip of his school pen, which had rolled onto the floor, pierced the sole of his right foot.
Main Story 2: Arawi uses Kaimei sumi ink as the ink for his pens when drawing manga. This is due to the ease of use of the container spout and the soothing, unique scent of the ink. Other unique scents he likes include incense sticks and the smell of new shoes.
Main Story 3: Arawi was preparing to renovate the Himarayairuka for an update after a long hiatus. However, he grew bored after three days, and the update stalled. The self-portrait (girl) that appeared in "Main Story 2" scolds the self-portrait (right foot pierced by a pen) that appeared in "Main Story 1": " What on earth were you thinking when you made the website!?!!?" The right foot self-portrait profusely apologizes: "S-sorry, I wasn't thinking about anything..."

Helvetica Standard 2
Bored, Arawi turned on the TV to kill time, but, as luck would have it, no interesting programs were airing that day. He then decided to play *Dragon Quest III* again.

Since acquiring the game in his youth, he had already completed the game entirely, including any misunderstandings. Therefore, he knew the content inside and out, yet this masterpiece held a kind of fascination that allowed him to play it without getting bored.

Arawi immediately set up his AV Famicom (New Famicom) and began playing *Dragon Quest III*. As he recalled from memory, he couldn't help but exclaim aloud at the high defense of the early-game tough enemy, the Army Crab (Guntai Gani).

Helvetica Standard 3

Illustration: A girl wearing clothes reminiscent of a Chinese Communist uniform rushes through a wasteland while puffing on a pipe. She mutters to herself, "It's not about *Dragon Quest V* or anything like that. Everyone, let's read *Ribon*." She meant that she would rather talk about the shōjo (girls') manga magazine *Ribon* than the much-talked-about remake of *Dragon Quest V* (released March 25, 2004).

Main Story: A robber wearing a ski mask is frozen in the hallway of the house he broke into, holding a bladed weapon. There is blood on the blade, and in the direction the robber is staring, a resident lies collapsed and bleeding. The robber, in a burst of momentum, had stabbed and killed the resident of the house.

However, the reason the robber is frozen is due to the victim's dying message. The victim had left a drawing of Takahashi Meijin, the former high-profile game publicist for the Family Computer, drawn in his own blood.

Helvetica Standard 4: Kin'yōbi no Hanashi da yo. (金曜日の話だよ。, "It's a Friday Story.")

Illustration: An illustration of a girl who is a humanized version of the Goomba character from *Super Mario Bros*. The girl is holding a Bullet Bill, an enemy character from the same game.

Main Story 1: Arawi picked up the current issue of *Weekly Famitsū* and was intrigued by an advertisement for the "Game Sound Museum ~Famicom Edition~." This product came with a music CD containing the background music of classic game titles. He decided to purchase it because the BGM included *Famicom Mukashibanashi: Shin Onigashima*, a game he had played extensively in his childhood.

Main Story 2: While creating storyboards for his manga, Arawi was watching the final episode of TV Asahi's news program *News Station* (aired March 26, 2004). Seeing the host, Hiroshi Kume, in his younger days during the footage reviewing past broadcasts, Arawi was reminded of his own childhood.

Helvetica Standard 5

On a whim, Arawi purchased a "Perman Dokodemo Swing" strap. This product was *Perman* merchandise released to commemorate the film *Doraemon: Nobita and the Windmasters*.

However, he bought two of the straps and ended up with the same item twice. So, he decided to give the extra one to a friend.

His friend thanked him and referred to the given strap as "Pāchichi." The correct character name is Birdman, but because the friend had a vague memory of *Perman*, he made this amusing mistake in naming the character.

Helvetica Standard 6

Illustration: A little girl dressed as a Priest from the *Dragon Quest* series is stuffing herself with a rice ball. Next to her is a character collapsing and screaming, "Q~." This dying character had been counting on the Priest's healing magic, but perished while the Priest was replenishing her nutrition. Faced with this severe situation—needing to heal a comrade but needing to eat first—Arawi leaves behind the maxim: "When one is hungry, one cannot heal, but while one is eating, they die."

Main Story: The sadcore band Toshi Record was scheduled to hold a live performance at an event venue near Arawi's home. Arawi was ecstatic about the concert since he was deeply invested in Toshi Record's album at the time, *Hana to Taiyō* (Flower and the Sun).

On the day of the live show, Arawi eagerly went to the venue, Kōenji Salon. However, what awaited him was the sight of the band members performing in a state of drunkenness. Arawi, having been subjected to music completely unlike their usual style, dejectedly listened to Hana to Taiyō again on his music player during his walk home that night.

Helvetica Standard 7

A mysterious creature (Arawi's self-portrait) was standing on cracked earth. This creature, with a pointed conical hat and a pointed mouth, was talking to its own tail. The tail was snake-like, and another head was attached to the tip of the tail.

"Say, I hear you've been severely delaying your emails lately. I don't have a computer, so I wouldn't know, but isn't that a bad thing?"

The other head at the tip of the tail profusely sweated at the sharp creature's correct argument. The head at the tip of the tail was indeed procrastinating on replying to emails and was flustered at being hit where it hurt.

Helvetica Standard 8: Hakase no Kimyō na Ikajō (博士の奇妙な烏賊情, "The Professor's Strange Squid Feelings")

A girl dressed like a Professor was conducting research using her assistant girl as a test subject. The Professor had placed a machine, apparently one of her inventions, over the assistant's head, causing the assistant to float in mid-air.

However, the Professor was not satisfied with the experimental results, puffed out her cheeks, and turned off the machine. She then walked over to the assistant and began to fiddle with the tape hanging down from the machine. The Professor, feeling vaguely dissatisfied, had started playing with a meaningless pastime.

The Professor was satisfied after folding the tape into the shape of a squid, and the assistant was left staring blankly at the small, instantly made "invention" of the Professor.

Helvetica Standard 9

"I kept waiting for a phone call that wouldn't ring." A young man with a paper bag over his head was intently staring at his mobile phone. The young man regretted the fight he had with his girlfriend, wanted to fix the relationship, but couldn't muster the courage to call. However, while he was dithering, it was decided that he would move to Tokyo, leaving his hometown.

The young man regretted his past actions and stared at his phone. Just as he was about to board the train to Tokyo, a call came in.

Anticipating a call from his girlfriend, the young man suddenly brightened. However, the caller was his mother. Seeing "Okan" (Mom) displayed on the phone screen, the young man was filled with a complex feeling that was both hollow and amusing.

Helvetica Standard 10

Arawi's friend, Maeda-kun, came to visit his house. Maeda-kun brought two gifts: an egg tart from "123 Factory" and a videotape containing his self-produced film, *Shirakura*. Arawi watched the film while eating the egg tart.

Shirakura was a short film based on the motif of parallel lines of black and white, stemming from the theme of "two things that absolutely do not intersect." The film was highly accomplished, and the opening, set against the music of Steve Reich, followed by a silent scene, strongly inspired Arawi. He described the impact not just as his eyes being opened, but as scales falling off his entire body.

Helvetica Standard 11: Nurarihyon no Kimochi mo Kangaero!! no Maki (ぬらりひょんの気持ちも考えろ!!の巻, "Chapter of Consider the Feelings of the Nurarihyon!!")

A girl was walking through a bushy path, carrying a monster taller than herself on her back. The girl was breathless, likely from carrying the heavy monster, but her steps were light. This was because she believed that if she could just bring this monster, a Nurarihyon, home, her sick grandmother would recover.

The girl had originally gone into town to buy medicine for her grandmother's illness. However, the apothecary owner told her the barely believable information that the illness would be cured simply by having a Nurarihyon. The innocent girl believed the apothecary and purchased the Nurarihyon.

"It cost a bit of money, but with this, Grandma will feel better, feel better..." The girl hastened home, her expression brightening.

Helvetica Standard 12

Arawi purchased the remake of *Dragon Quest V*, which he had been curious about. While reveling in the joy of getting a new game, he also felt a slight anxiety. Since he had only recently been playing the Famicom version of *Dragon Quest III*, he wasn't sure if he could accept the drastically changed visual expression due to the advancement in gaming hardware.

Seeing is believing, so Arawi immediately started his PlayStation 2 and began playing *Dragon Quest V*. After playing for a while, the enemy character that appears early on, the Hammerhood, appeared on the screen. When Arawi attacked it, the Hammerhood stumbled backward and fell over. He exclaimed, "W-What the heck," in admiration for the graphical evolution unimaginable on the Famicom.

Virtual Boy Helvetica Standard 13

Arawi thought he hadn't played games made by Nintendo lately, as he had only been playing the *Dragon Quest* series. So, he took out the Nintendo-made game console, the Virtual Boy, and began playing it.

While doing so, he received a notification from the Comitia office regarding circle participation. He had completely forgotten, but the next Comitia event was already fast approaching next month.

He needed to start drawing a new self-produced manga soon. However, he also wanted to continue writing *Helvetica Standard*, and he had an ongoing illustration series in *Medical Asahi*. His main job in phototypesetting also demanded his attention. He wanted to continue *Dragon Quest V*, but he had just resolved not to forget his love for Nintendo.

His eyes were filled with things he wanted to do, things he wished to do, and things he had to do. Realizing that his sleep time would approach zero if he completed all of them, Arawi broke out in a cold sweat.

Helvetica Standard 14

During gym class at school. Kiri-chan, a girl in class 2-4, casually showed off her outfit of the day to her friend, Mio-chan. After gazing at Kiri-chan for a while, Mio-chan realized that her attire strongly resembled Buffalo Man. Kiri-chan, wearing a gym uniform, bloomers, and shiny black leg covers, was sporting a unique fashion inspired by the Devil Chōjin from *Kinnikuman*.

Helvetica Standard 15

The Goddess of the Spring appeared before a man, holding a golden item and a silver item. The Goddess alluded to the Aesop's fable "The Honest Woodcutter" and asked, "Is the game console you dropped the Golden Lynx? Or is it this Silver Atari Jaguar?"

Judging from the Goddess's conversation, the man seemed to have dropped some sort of niche game console into the spring. Both the Lynx and the Atari Jaguar were little-known game consoles produced by the American video game company Atari.

However, the Goddess then posed a third question, asking the man if the one he dropped into the spring was the "Copper WonderSwan."

At the time, in 2004, the WonderSwan, a console developed by Bandai, had already withdrawn from the market the previous year, having lost the sales competition with rival companies. Nevertheless, the man thought the WonderSwan had a bit more recognition than niche consoles like the Lynx and Atari Jaguar.

Therefore, he was unsettled by the Goddess's statement. He asked back, "Wait a minute... the WonderSwan, is it already... on that side!?"

Helvetica Standard 16

Arawi was reading Kazuichi Hanawa's manga *In the Prison* while smoking a cigarette. He was taking a break after finalizing the concept for the new manga he would present at Comitia next month.

Then, a mysterious creature suddenly perched on his head. It was the creature from "7," with a pointed conical hat, a pointed mouth, and another snake-like head attached to its tail. This creature, a manifestation of his inner thoughts, questioned whether he could finish it in time for Comitia if he started drawing now.

Arawi, whose subconscious fear was revealed, instinctively hit the mysterious creature—and his own head—with the tankōbon he was holding.

However, the mysterious creature was already nowhere to be seen.

Arawi felt the pain from hitting his own head and conceded, "I see, I see." He then leaned over his desk and began cutting the storyboards for the new manga.

Helvetica Standard 16.5

An illustration of a girl blowing a bubble gum bubble. On the girl's left shoulder is a pop-art skull tattoo with the hiragana "bon-nō" (worldly desires/Klesha).

Helvetica Standard 16.6
An illustration of Maeda-kun attempting to pet a dog under its chin.

Helvetica Standard 17
Illustration: A child from the opening of the anime *Manga Nippon Mukashibanashi*, riding a dragon and holding a denden-daiko (pellet drum).
Main Story: Arawi excused himself from a game of Shogi with an acquaintance, having used up all his allocated time for the match to attend Comitia 68. As a result, even while distributing his new manga, he couldn't concentrate, worried about his opponent. Nevertheless, he had a fun time, talking with many people and receiving gifts.

After successfully selling out his new manga, *Kokoro*, and the compilation, *Sasameyuki*, Arawi took a breather, and two circles came to greet him. The first was "Poi-san," and the second was "Mizuki-san" (Mizuki Maya). Arawi was filled with gratitude, but the fact that Mizuki-san's circle name was "Munchausen Shōkōgun" (Munchausen Syndrome) distracted him, and he couldn't concentrate on the conversation.

The fun time quickly passed, and he left the Comitia venue feeling satisfied. Then, on the train ride home, he received a notification from his Shogi opponent: "Time out."

Kokoro (こころ, "Heart") - Published May 2004

◆ A story of a girl who receives a wooden box from the sky, experiences strange encounters and separations, and eventually meets her other self.

A girl stood on a corner of a featureless plain, extending her arms forward, palms up. She was preparing to catch a wooden box falling from high in the sky.

The girl said nothing, but she intuitively knew that the box, about the size of two fists, held something important.

Having caught the wooden box, the girl ran into the distance. Her sole objective was to reach a chair placed far away.

Eventually, the sun set, and darkness enveloped the surroundings, inviting sleep. However, the girl never rested for a moment, continuing to move her legs even while sleeping. She kept moving forward, even while her eyes were closed and a snot bubble was inflated from her nose.

The dark night broke, and the sunlight began to illuminate the plain again. Meanwhile, the girl was still running while sleeping.

After a while, the girl didn't notice a rock ahead, tripped, and stumbled. She fell face-first onto the ground, but was saved by the snot bubble she had inflated while sleeping. The snot bubble acted as an airbag, absorbing the impact when she hit the ground.

She also accidentally let go of the wooden box when she fell, but the snot bubble came to the rescue again. The snot bubble transformed into the shape of a giant hand and firmly caught the box that had been tossed into the air. Thanks to this, the wooden box was undamaged, and its contents were protected.

Waking up when she fell, the girl only now noticed the existence of the snot bubble she had inflated in her sleep. However, the girl was only interested in the box before her and had no attachment to the snot bubble. After confirming the wooden box's safety, she left the snot bubble behind and started running again.

The snot bubble quietly passed away after the girl ran far away. Strangely, the snot bubble, which had been alive moments before, expired and solidified like a stone after being abandoned by the girl.

After running for a long time, the girl finally reached her destination where a single chair was placed. She rushed to the chair, placed the wooden box on the seat, knelt down, and intently observed the wooden box. The wood grain pattern was reflected in her staring eyes.

After staring at the wooden box for a while, the girl noticed the rain beginning to fall nearby. The sight of the raindrops falling, leaving linear trails, closely resembled the wood grain pattern.

The girl lifted her face and turned her gaze toward the falling rain. There stood a little girl with a Teru Teru Bōzu hair ornament, holding an umbrella. Perhaps reflecting the nature of the Teru Teru Bōzu, the little girl had no arms. Instead, three large hands floated around her body. The girl skillfully used these hands to support the Japanese umbrella.

The Teru Teru Bōzu little girl offered the umbrella. The girl hesitated but finally decided to accept the umbrella. The little girl smiled innocently, seemingly happy that it was taken.

The girl opened the umbrella, intending to use the gift immediately. An unexpected event occurred: within the moment she looked down at the umbrella, the little girl vanished.

The little girl was gone without a trace, as if she had never been there. The rain also stopped, and all that was visible now was a small puddle created by the rain that had just fallen.

The girl was bewildered, unable to grasp the situation, but the next moment, two vivid images flashed into her mind. One was the smiling little girl, and the other was the deceased snot bubble. At that moment, she intuitively knew she would never meet the little girl or the snot bubble again.

The girl, having realized the fleeting truth, still couldn't process the situation and stood motionless for a long time. However, a thought seemed to strike her, and she fastened the handle of the Japanese umbrella to the chair, keeping the umbrella open. Then, many raindrops flew out from inside the umbrella, wetting the wooden box.

The rain falling from inside the umbrella. The wetting wooden box. The wood grain pattern engraved on the box. The abandoned snot bubble. The vanished Teru Teru Bōzu little girl. Various images came and went in the girl's heart, and she was emotionally moved. Large tears streamed from her eyes.

Although most people are usually unaware, we are all entrusted to the flow of time that never returns. Consequently, we are often subjected to situations where we cannot meet important people again, like the evaporated little girl or the deceased snot bubble.

That is a sad thing, but not at all unusual. The girl cried because she was struck by the reality of the flow of time and its fleeting nature.

After a long time, when the girl stopped crying, the rain falling from inside the umbrella also ceased. After waiting a while, the lid of the wooden box, which hadn't moved at all, opened. From inside the box, "other self," who looked exactly like the girl, crawled out.

The girl's expression brightened upon finding her other self, and she seemed to know exactly where she should step next. The girl took the hand of her other self, who had just emerged from the box, and without hesitation, walked toward some distant place.

The journey of the girl and her other self was just about to begin. Instead of the rain that had been falling, cherry blossom petals were flying out from inside the umbrella. It was as if they were celebrating the two's departure.

Helvetica Standard Chapters 18–44 -Published May–August 2004

Helvetica Standard 18

Illustration: A girl sleeping, nestled on a rabbit-shaped pillow.
Main Story 1: Since Himarayairuka did not have an access counter installed, Arawi didn't know how many people were visiting. He decided to try introducing a program (CGI) for access analysis. However, since he had been away from website creation for a long time, he had forgotten how to do it. Unable to read the website's source code, he felt like he was staring at ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics.
Main Story 2: Bored, Arawi started playing the Super Famicom game *Nobunaga's Ambition: Bushō Fūunroku*. He had played this game on over ten playthroughs, yet it was a masterpiece that he periodically felt the urge to play again.

Helvetica Standard 19–20

A young man was turning his face away from the woman in front of him with a look of regret. "...I'm sorry," the young man said with a bitter apology.

The woman, who seemed to have an idea of what was happening, opened her eyes wide and asked the young man, "...You saw it... my phone wallpaper..."

However, the young man had no capacity to respond to the woman's question and only repeated, "I'm sorry." The young man was looking down, the woman was clenching her fist, and nearby, the woman's mobile phone was carelessly placed, displaying the wallpaper.

It showed a very silly-looking Anglerfish.

Helvetica Standard 21: "Kakkoii to wa Kōyū Koto daro! no Maki" (かっこいいとはこうゆう事だろ！の巻, "The Chapter of 'This is What Cool Is!'")

A black cat in the arms of a girl raised its front paw and said, "I can even hit a mokugyo (wooden fish)."

The girl instinctively asked back, "Huh? Even a mokugyo?!"

The black cat then slipped out of the girl's arms, landed on the ground, and declared, "I can hit it all I want."

The girl blushed at the charm of the black cat, which boasted it could hit the mokugyo many times. To hide her embarrassment, she cried out, "Oh, you idiot!"

Helvetica Standard Part 22

A mechanical doll robot received a fax from the future (14 years later, in 2018). The robot said that the "Most Hottest Four-Panel Manga" currently popular in the future was being sent.

The interested young man examined the printed future manga. It depicted, in a childish style, the professional wrestling move 36-Mon Kick by Giant Baba exploding into a man's face. Even after taking the move, the man casually shrugged it off by rotating his neck once to absorb the shock.

The robot, who hadn't read the manga yet, asked for his impression, "How is it?" The young man muttered, "A single rotation, huh..." with a distant look in his eyes.

Helvetica Standard 23: "Boris Vian ga Miete Kita yo." (ボリスヴィアンが見えてきたよ, "I Can See Boris Vian Now")

Illustration: A girl is sitting with her legs outstretched, wearing tissue boxes on her feet like shoes. The Boris Vian novel Froth on the Daydream (L'Écume des Jours) is near her feet, and a fish is swimming in the air.

Main Story: The self-composed music, "Nezu no Neko," which he had been working on, was finally completed. It was the second piece, following "Tobazu Tori," which he had created about half a year prior. Arawi was inspired and decided to sell a CD containing both songs, so he started drawing the jacket illustration.

The finished jacket was a masterful creation. Elevated by his mood, Arawi further began writing liner notes as a bonus feature for the CD.

Helvetica Standard 24: "Sayonara Sayonara Coca-Cola Arawi" (さよならさよならコカコーラ　あらゐ, "Goodbye Goodbye Coca-Cola: Arawi")

Arawi wanted to purchase an LP record album by Akiyuki Nosaka that was being sold at a store. However, because of its high rarity value, the price was exorbitant, so he gave up and returned home.

Later, his friend Maeda-kun visited his house and immediately began drawing manga in silence, with hardly a greeting. Arawi was taken aback but, taking inspiration from Maeda-kun, started drawing illustrations next to him.

After some time had passed, Maeda-kun pulled out a record album. Coincidentally, it was a reissued CD of Akiyuki Nosaka's best-of album. Arawi and Maeda-kun listened to Nosaka's "Marilyn Monroe No Return" together.

Helvetica Standard 25: "yappari ka-torijjiga-iine" ("The Cartridges are Still the Best")
Arawi played the Famicom game *Raid on Bungeling Bay* by Hudson Soft for the first time in a while. *Raid on Bungeling Bay* had a function linked to the microphone built into the controller, allowing players to interact with the game through their voice.

Following his memory from back then, he shouted, "Hudson!" into the controller. However, no matter how loudly he shouted, the controller did not respond. The AV Famicom (New Famicom) he was currently using had the microphone function removed. Arawi, engrossed in the game, didn't realize this and continued to loudly shout, "Hudson! Hudson!"

Helvetica Standard 26
Illustration: A shy-looking girl is hesitantly saying, "Um, um, I'll take this," while clutching a Famicom cartridge. The game the girl is trying to buy is the rare title *Emoyan no 10-bai Pro Yakyū: Central League-Hen*.
Main Story: Arawi purchased a Daruma doll in Asakusa that he had wanted since the end of the previous year. The charming design of the Daruma was comforting to look at. After being thoroughly soothed, Arawi picked up a brush to perform the ritual of painting in the white eyes as a wish. However, where he should have only painted one eye, he got carried away and painted black into both eyes.

Helvetica Standard 27
As a woman was fishing in a mountain stream, the float she had cast into the river reacted. Seeing that she had a catch, she pulled up the line, and a cartridge of *Emoyan no 10-bai Pro Yakyū: Central League-Hen* was hooked on the line.

Helvetica Standard 28: Hōkago Rhapsody (放課後ラプソディー, "After-School Rhapsody")
After school. A male student on cleaning duty was cleaning the classroom and carrying the trash can when a female classmate was about to leave. The female student, who was chatting with her friend as she passed the male student, was inexplicably wearing rabbit ears on her head. The male student, captivated by the girl's ears, suddenly felt like eating the crusts of bread.

Helvetica Standard 29 da yo.: Getsuyōbi no Hanashi (月曜日の話, "Monday’s Story")

Illustration: A girl is holding a stone statue of a two-heads-tall character with long ears.

Main Story: Arawi's relative, Hiroshi (handle name: Sentarō), invited him to engage in music activities. This was good news for Arawi, who had been creating his own music using music editing software. Since they had been in a band together when Arawi first moved to Tokyo, the music production discussion became lively. Carried away by the momentum, they decided on a unit name, calling themselves "Kremlin no Tō" after the title of a post Arawi made on Himarayairuka.

Helvetica Standard 30

Arawi was, as usual, drawing manga in his room. He showed the finished manuscript to his friend while repeatedly chanting, "金田 (Kanada)！ 鉄夫 (Tetsuo)！ 金田！鉄夫！金田！鉄夫!" Having read Katsuhiro Otomo's manga *AKIRA*, he was repeatedly calling the names of the characters he recalled.

However, Arawi had slightly misremembered the characters' names. The correct name was "金田鉄**雄**（**Kaneda** Tetsuo). "

Helvetica Standard 31

Due to constantly eating convenience store processed foods, Arawi became ill. He thought about starting to cook his own meals to improve his poor diet, but he didn't even have a refrigerator, let alone a rice cooker, at home. So, he went shopping in the city to buy a used refrigerator.

However, once he entered a recycling shop in the city, he hesitated to buy anything because the home appliances were more expensive than he expected. After agonizing for a while, he suddenly realized he had purchased the latest PlayStation 2 game, *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*.

Helvetica Standard 32: Herubechika Sutandādo

A male student walking along the roadside was stopped by an unfamiliar girl. The girl started talking about how "I like cheesecake" without any context, confusing the male student.

However, the next words the girl uttered made the male student's eyes widen. She named the 60th Yokozuna, saying, "But I like Futahaguro even more." Hearing the name of the classic Sumo wrestler, whom a young person would not normally know, the male student took on a tense expression.

Helvetica Standard Sono Sanjūsan: an-pang
Illustration: A drawing of a bean paste bun (anpan) from Ginza Kimuraya.
Main Story: A girl was anxiously waiting by the side of the road for her rendezvous, Kitazawa-san. Since Kitazawa-san had told her in advance that he would come in a "rare car," the girl was highly anticipating that he would arrive in something like a limousine.

Just then, Kitazawa-san arrived in a rare vehicle, as he had announced. However, that vehicle was the Anpanman-go (Anpanman car) from the anime *Anpanman*. As soon as she saw the Anpanman-go speeding toward her, the girl instinctively ran away.

Helvetica Standard 34: Kokkuri Shōjo to Tōhoku no Kami. no Maki (こっくり少女と東北の神の巻, "The Chapter of Kokkuri Girl and the God of Tohoku.")
Main Story: A girl in a shrine maiden outfit began the ceremony to summon Kokkuri-san (a Japanese version of the Ouija board). Placing a 10-yen coin on a paper marked with the gojūon (Japanese syllabary) chart and resting her finger on it, the girl asked, "Kokkuri-san, Kokkuri-san, what is for dinner tonight?" The Fox Spirit then moved the girl's finger to point to "tsu," "ra," "su," "zu," and "su." The spirit had intended to say "Chirashizushi," but due to a Tohoku dialect/accent, it was rendered as a unique spelling.
Photo: A photo of chirashizushi is published along with the text "chirashizushi."

Helvetica Standard 35: "[Ayamachite wa aratameru ni habakaru koto nakare] Ayamachi o okashita toki wa, sugu aratameyo. Sukoshi mo enryo suru hitsuyō wa nai" (【過ちは改むるに憚ることなかれ】過ちをおかしたときはすぐ改めよ。少しも遠慮する必要はない, "When you make a mistake, correct it immediately. There is no need for any hesitation")
A half-empty plastic bottle container was sitting on the roadside. The bottle had a label for Pepsi Blue, a carbonated beverage released for a limited time in the summer of 2004.

The scene then shifts: A man in a disheveled kimono is aiming an arrow he has drawn on a bow. The target of the man's arrow is the Pepsi Blue bottle. The man was apparently dissatisfied with the polarizing flavor of the carbonated drink and was attempting to protest it.

Helvetica Standard 36: Kahō wo Matteitara Rentaru Mikka mo Sugite Mashita (果報を寝て待っていたらレンタル三日も過ぎてました, "Waiting for good fortune, three days of rental passed")
Illustration: A girl in pajamas is dozing off while hugging an oval body pillow with an ofuda (talisman) stuck on it. Nearby is a bag containing a Tsutaya rental video, suggesting that the return deadline has passed while the girl was sleeping.

Main Story: Arawi, whose wallet was already light even though the second half of the year had just begun, decided to sell game software to increase his living expenses. It was painful to sell software he had cherished since childhood, but he was hopeful that selling this much would at least cover the cost of a juice today.

However, at the used game store where he requested the buyout, he was given an unexpected appraisal price. One of the game software he brought, *Super Monkey Daibōken*, was appraised at a negative 100 yen.

Helvetica Standard 37: Tanabata Sokutō (たなばた即答, "Tanabata Instant Reply")

Illustration: A girl in a kimono is looking at the viewer, holding a drawstring bag in one hand. Two soul flames are flying around the girl.
Main Story: A female student is taking a paper test at school. The first question in the music subject was: 《Fill in the appropriate letters. "mc.A□□□"》 The female student, without hesitation, wrote in "tea."

Helvetica Standard 38

Illustration: Against the backdrop of a vast desert, a boy with earphones in his ears was standing still. When the boy looked up at the sky, a "Kumomadori" was flying with its wings spread.
Main Story: There was a piece of paper with a QR code written on it. A character who found it brought a pen and drew two dots just above the QR code. The two dots looked like eyes and the QR code looked like a mouth, and a character was instantly born.

Note: The QR code in the work was actually readable and linked to a page containing the text "Himarayairuka." However, in the collected edition released in 2009, the QR code was replaced with a link to the podcast Arawi and Sawada's Diamond Soccer (http://arawifoot.blog.so-net.ne.jp) that Arawi co-hosted with his friend Sawada.

Helvetica Standard 39

Having received income from his job, Arawi went to a toy store in the city to satisfy his pent-up material desires. His target for the day was a monster figurine from *Ultraman* he had seen before. Since the item was already out of stock, he planned to have it specially ordered, but a problem arose: he didn't know the name of the monster he wanted (Four-Dimensional Monster Bullton).

Arawi tried to describe the monster's appearance through gestures to ask the store clerk for the name. However, the appearance of Bullton, which resembles a giant barnacle, was difficult to describe, and he could only manage incoherent words.

He tried to convey the image by saying, "Bumpy one," "Squishy and... lumpy and... chikuwa-like...," but the clerk couldn't understand. Since he couldn't get the desired figure, he went home whimpering.

Helvetica Standard 40

Illustration: Only the face and right hand of a long-haired person are floating in the darkness. In the right hand, a pen with a rabbit character attached is held.

Main Story: Arawi felt that he had recently started hearing frog croaking near his home. He took a walk around his apartment to look for the frog. He found a stray cat taking a nap in the apartment's yard. Drawn in by its cuteness, he approached, and a frog was sitting on the cat's upper body.

Helvetica Standard 41: THE TV

Illustration: An illustration of a woman with a tattoo on her back against a dark background. The tattoo design features a raimon (meander/thunder pattern) and the text "Arawi Keiichi." This illustration was an homage to the opening credits of the anime *R.O.D -the TV-*.

Main Story: Arawi was requested to contribute a guest manuscript to the dōjinshi club "Pu-pa-zu" belonging to a colleague from Shinkōsha. The colleague planned to publish a dōjinshi based on R.O.D -the TV- and had personally selected Arawi.

Arawi, who wasn't very familiar with the anime, started watching from the first episode. Finding it much more interesting than expected, he ended up watching all 26 episodes of the main story in one sitting over 13 hours.

Immersed in the world of the anime, Arawi mumbled a slip of the tongue with a vacant look in his eyes: "Nenene-." The word referred to the name of one of the characters, Nenene Nīrakawa.

Helvetica Standard 42

Illustration: A girl points into the distance and delivers a line, "Ahaha, people are like trash," an homage to the line by the character Muska from the film *Castle in the Sky*. The girl is straddling a strange, wheel-less motorcycle-like vehicle. The emblem of Coro-Dragon, the mascot of *Monthly CoroCoro Comic*, is engraved on the front of the vehicle.

Main Story: A robber wearing a ski mask is frozen in the hallway of the house he broke into, holding a bladed weapon. There is blood on the blade, and in the direction the robber is staring, a resident lies collapsed and bleeding. The robber, in a burst of momentum, had stabbed and killed the resident of the house.

However, the reason the robber is frozen is due to the victim's dying message. The victim had left a drawing of Nonki-kun, a manga by Yōji Katakura serialized in *CoroCoro Comic* in the 1980s, drawn in his own blood.

Helvetica Standard 43

Illustration: A girl wearing a straw hat against the backdrop of a summer sky filled with cumulonimbus clouds.

Main Story: Inside a traditional Japanese house, a girl named Icchan (Arawi) was whimpering. Worried about her, Hanyū En-Kichirō Yasutada, a character Arawi had created earlier, asked, "What's wrong? Why the long face?"

Icchan began to explain that the cause of her tears was the access analysis she had installed on her website. The access analysis, which examines which page readers used to navigate to her website, showed the existence of readers coming to her site via web archives.

Icchan was crying because her old website, which was her "past blemish," had been discovered.

Helvetica Standard 44: Hōshin (方針, "Policy")

A salesman trying to solicit a subscription contract for the "Asatan Shimbun" visited a young man's residence. The young man looked intently at the visiting salesman with a weary expression and simply asked, "...Work clothes?" The salesgirl was dressed in a classical Lolita-style outfit, an attire unsuitable for door-to-door sales. Blushing, the girl admitted that her outfit was her own personal clothes. As soon as he heard her words, the young man decided to take out a five-year newspaper subscription contract.

Homare (誉, "Praise/Honor") - Published May 2004

◆ A story about a trio of female junior high school students enjoying their summer vacation and a young man who briefly interacts with them. It is a story that affirms and honors people who are living their everyday lives.

Part 1: "Homare no Ichi" (ほまれのいち, "Praise: Part 1," Cover Illustration: A Daruma doll with black eyes drawn in both eye sockets)

【Morning】(朝)
July 30, 2004. Second-year junior high student Yana-chan had an appointment to meet her classmate, Kotori-chan. Despite this, she succumbed to sleep and overslept by two hours.

"Mom, why didn't you wake me up?" Yana-chan, still in her pajamas, complained to her mother in the living room.

"Isn't your summer vacation starting the day before yesterday?" her mother retorted indifferently, her eyes on the newspaper.

"Oh, right... No! I have an appointment with Kotori-chan!"

"You didn't say anything like that."

"Oh, right... No! I have an appointment with Kotori-chan!"

"Yes, you didn't!"

After a conversation that went nowhere, Yana-chan abruptly changed the subject: "Lend me 1000 yen!" The mother was speechless at her daughter's audacity.

【Reversal】(逆転)
Yana-chan, having changed into her outside clothes, rushed toward the designated park meeting spot. Since Kotori-chan did not have a mobile phone, Yana-chan had no choice but to go to the meeting place to apologize for being late.

Even the carefree Yana-chan showed a sign of regret, admitting that being two hours late was unacceptable. However, she had also prepared a secret strategy to appease Kotori-chan.

"If I present this to Kotori-chan, who loves 'Wa' (和, "Japanese style")... she'll be putty in my hands!" She figured that presenting the Daruma doll she brought from home would surely earn her forgiveness.

However, as expected, Kotori-chan was not at the meeting place park.

"The 'Kotori-chan is missing' episode," Yana-chan muttered her feelings in the style of a TV program title call, and stood alone, hugging the Daruma.

【Rope Cat】(縄猫)
In fact, Kotori-chan hadn't gone home after waiting too long. She was even later than Yana-chan and hadn't arrived at the park yet. Kotori-chan's lateness was due to a black cat she encountered on the way, which had a shimenawa (sacred rope) tied around its neck.

(It looks hungry. Is it okay to give it some food?) Hearing the black cat's stomach rumble, Kotori-chan took out a sweet bread (Amashoku) from her bag. However, the black cat seemed unimpressed and pushed the sweet bread away with its front paw.

【Terashima】(寺島)
"Yana-san, what are you doing?" Tera-chan called out to Yana-chan, who was walking in the park. Tera-chan was a friendly junior in the first year of junior high.

Yana-chan immediately said, "Oh, Tera, treat me to a juice." Tera-chan flinched but asked the reason why Yana-chan was standing still.

"...So, that's why I was waiting for the late Kotori-chan," Yana-chan explained the situation with a defiant attitude, as if she were the one waiting for Kotori-chan.

"Eh? Kotori-san must have definitely gone home!" In reality, Kotori-chan was also late, but Tera-chan, being a person of common sense, never thought Yana-chan would have arrived earlier. Tera-chan made a reasonable point to the unrepentant Yana-chan: "What kind of thought process is that!"

【Revenge】(リベンジ)
Even though the black cat rejected the sweet bread, Kotori-chan didn't give up. Determined to get the black cat to eat, she bought a paper carton of milk from a nearby vending machine.

"Hehehe, cats definitely like milk," Kotori-chan approached the black cat again and inserted a straw into the carton, ready to let it drink the milk.

But then, she realized that a cat wouldn't be able to suck milk through a straw. Kotori-chan held her head in despair.

【From the Side】(傍から)
Convinced that Kotori-chan must have gone home, Yana-chan and Tera-chan left the park together.

"Didn't you contact her by mobile phone or something?"

"Nah, Kotori-chan has a pager."

"Eh!? Kotori-san has a pager!? That service has already ended... Wait, what's with that Daruma?"

"Kotori-chan likes 'Wa' stuff, right? I was going to give it to her."

"But... that Daruma has both eyes painted in."

As the two were having a casual conversation, they saw Kotori-chan squatting ahead. Kotori-chan was attempting to give the paper carton of milk she had just bought to the black cat, even though she knew it was futile. But the black cat, just like with the sweet bread, swatted the paper carton away with its front paw.

【Elimination】(消去)
Kotori-chan's face brightened when she saw her two friends approaching. However, the next moment, she realized she was massively late for the appointment.

"Appointment with Yana-chan → Relaxed breakfast → Late → Relaxed stroll → Bothering a cat → Very late → The end of the world!!" Thinking this, Kotori-chan quickly apologized to Yana-chan.

Yana-chan, in turn, took an inexplicably condescending stance and pressed her, "What's done is done. How about we settle this with Mita Chaya's chocolate dumplings and Gyokuro tea?"

"I am grateful for your immense generosity. The world is saved," Kotori-chan expressed her overly polite gratitude, and Yana-chan replied jokingly, "No problem, I'm the Messiah."

Tera-chan, observing the exchange between her two seniors, was dumbfounded by Yana-chan's cunningness in smoothly glossing over her own tardiness.

【Cockatrice】(コカトリス)
The reason Yana-chan and Kotori-chan had made an appointment was to do their summer homework together.

"You're free too, Tera, right? Want to do it together? Even though we're in different grades."

However, Tera-chan had already finished all her homework on the first day of summer vacation. Yana-chan and Kotori-chan were so shocked by Tera-chan's studiousness that they froze as if turned to stone.

Yana-chan suddenly came to her senses and shouted, "You've forgotten your purpose as a student!" and Kotori-chan pleaded, "Let me copy your homework!" Tera-chan, flustered by her two seniors, pointed out, "We're in different grades!"

(Interlude 1)
On the way back from the family restaurant, Kotori-chan purchased the chocolate dumplings and Gyokuro tea at Mita Chaya, as requested by Yana-chan. The store owner then, in a tone that was neither a joke nor serious, stated the price: "12,000 yen."

Part 2: "Homare no Ni" (ほまれのに, "Praise: Part 2," Cover Illustration: A black cat with a shimenawa wrapped around its neck instead of a collar)

【Rare】(レア)

Tonight, an overnight stay and study session was scheduled at Yana-chan's house. Tera-chan, on her way to Yana-chan's house, was excited about helping her seniors with their homework and then playing the video game *Momotetsu* (Momotaro Dentetsu) all night.

At that moment, two young men were intently watching Tera-chan's back as she walked by. This was because the hoodie she was wearing was a limited edition model of the little-known "Mogura" brand. The young men, who were also wearing the "Mogura" brand, were impressed by Tera-chan's high level of connoisseurship.

【The Tip of the Sword of Seriousness】(真剣の矛先)

Arriving at Yana-chan's house, Tera-chan began helping her two seniors with their homework. The excellent Tera-chan effortlessly solved the problems, even those a grade above hers.

Meanwhile, Yana-chan and Kotori-chan, ignoring their studies, were holding calligraphy brushes and drawing picture-characters. They proudly showed Tera-chan their completed drawings of Henohenomoheji and Tsuru ni ha Maru-Mushi (A crane has a circle-bug).

"I think that's unacceptable," Tera-chan calmly admonished her seniors.

【Dane】(でーん)

Yana-chan and Kotori-chan, having been cautioned by their junior, reluctantly continued their homework. Tera-chan, on the other hand, was now completely preoccupied with Momotetsu. Even though her seniors hadn't finished their homework, Tera-chan, paying no mind, was the one who suggested they play a game.

"Momotetsu?" Kotori-chan, who was unfamiliar with video games, asked with a question mark over the unfamiliar word.

"I told you, I don't have Momotetsu," Yana-chan, feeling dejected by her homework, replied vaguely, inexplicably in a Kansai dialect.

In response, Tera-chan raised her index finger and held up Momotetsu 21 (for PlayStation 2), the latest in the Momotetsu series. Tera-chan had brought the software with her.

However, Yana-chan, still unenthusiastic, replied, "I told you, I don't have a PlayStation 2," still in the Kansai dialect.

【Ancient Blow】(いにしえのブロー)

To Yana-chan, who muttered, "I want a PlayStation 2," Tera-chan, who desperately wanted to play Momotetsu, pulled out her trump card. Tera-chan, being a Momotetsu enthusiast, had collected all the previously released software and had brought them all to Yana-chan's house.

"I brought all versions: the PlayStation version, the FC version, the HuCard (PC Engine/Turbo-grafx 16) version, the SFC version! Now, which one do you want to play!?"

However, the only significantly niche game console in Yana-chan's house was the Playdia. Surprised by the unexpected answer, Tera-chan exclaimed, "Playdia!? seriously!!??"

【All-Nighter】(徹夜)

The location shifts to in front of a Uniqlo store in the city. Although it was late at night, a large crowd had formed a long queue. The people in line were waiting in front of the store, seeking the summer limited edition of the "Mogura" T-shirt, which would go on sale the next morning.

Among the crowd were the two young men who had passed Tera-chan earlier. The young man, an ardent supporter of the "Mogura" brand, was dozing off leaning against the wall. The people in the waiting line quietly continued to wait for the store to open.

【I See】(なるほど)

Back at Yana-chan's house. The three girls, having finished their studies, were getting ready for bed by taking a bath.

"Bub (Bath salt tablets) are the best for a bath, after all," Yana-chan, changed into her pajamas, returned to the room, wiping her wet hair with a towel. Tera-chan, who had already finished bathing, had changed her hairstyle and was wearing her hair in pigtails with hair ties.

Perhaps because of her naturally curly hair, Tera-chan's tied-up hair stuck straight out horizontally to the ground. Yana-chan, curious about the hair quality, involuntarily reached out and snatched the hair tie. Seeing the hair tips curl outwards, Yana-chan shouted excitedly, "All the mysteries are solved!"

【Mixture】(ミクスチャー)

Kotori-chan, who took the last bath, returned to the room in a jinbei-style pajama set. Her pajamas were popular, with compliments flying: "Oh, Kotori-san, those pajamas are cute," and "Whoa, Kotori-chan, you look cool!"

"They're hand-me-downs, though," Kotori-chan shyly smiled and lowered the bath towel she was hugging. Revealed on the chest of her pajamas was a large print of a "Boy riding a bat." This character was the former mascot of the Yomiuri Giants used in the 1980s. The two who had just complimented Kotori-chan were left speechless by the design, which was far too unfashionable for a second-year junior high girl.

【Darkness】(闇)
As it was late, the three girls decided to go to bed, turned off the lights, and lay down. Perhaps due to being tired from studying, Yana-chan and Kotori-chan immediately fell asleep. Tera-chan, who was the only one awake, listened to her two seniors' sleep talk.

"I'd like an anpan," "Me too," "Still, a dorayaki," "Intelligent..." Tera-chan couldn't help but exclaim, "What kind of sleep talk is that...?" at her seniors who fell asleep as if nothing had happened.

(Interlude 2)
The next morning. Tera-chan woke up, confirmed the physical Playdia console at Yana-chan's house, and exclaimed, "She really had it!"

(Interlude 3)
Yana-chan held up the hanshi paper she had written on with the calligraphy brush last night. The paper was inscribed with a single, skillfully written character: "誉" (Homare).

Helvetica Standard Chapters 45–73 - Published August–December 2004

Helvetica Standard 45

Illustration: The creature from "7" and "15" with the snake tail and conical hat.

Main Story: Arawi fell seriously ill and, in his semiconscious state, conceived of disjointed images. The surreal scene that unfolded in his mind was: "A grassland spread behind Bob Dylan, and a girl and a floating object were making contact there."

Helvetica Standard 46

Illustration: A man almost completely submerged in water is holding his hands above the surface, puffing on a cigarette, careful not to get it wet.

Main Story: As Arawi was drawing manga late at night, the music playing suddenly cut out, perhaps due to a faulty CD player. Annoyed by the equipment failure, he decided to listen to a different album for a change of pace and began searching for another CD.

It was difficult to find the desired album in the piles of carelessly placed CD cases, and Arawi searched all over the room. He finally opened the case for the CD of Shakuhachi (bamboo flute) music.

However, the case was empty. Arawi had inadvertently put the CD he wanted to listen to somewhere else.

Helvetica Standard 47: Arawi ♡ Keiichi

The girl was invited to her close male Senpai's room today. The girl, who had a crush on Senpai, enjoyed soaking up the atmosphere of her idol's home.

Eventually, Senpai left the room, and the girl casually looked around. She noticed a book sticking out from under the bed. (Senpai is a boy after all, but no... Wait, this is probably one of those pervy magazines, isn't it?) The girl hesitated but took out the book. What she found was neither an explicit magazine nor an ordinary book, but something completely unexpected: the strategy guide for the Famicom game *LaSalle Ishii's Child's Quest* was hidden there.

Helvetica Standard 48

Illustration: A figure of the space monster Eleking from *Ultraman* is placed on top of a bowl of food.

Main Story: A priest (oshō) in a worn-out Buddhist robe was throwing the contents of instant cup noodles directly into his mouth instead of placing them in a dish.

Later, a disciple appeared and called out to his master, the priest, but the priest did not stop his lazy behavior. Worse, he poured hot water from a teapot into his mouth, which was already full of noodles, creating chicken ramen inside his mouth.

Helvetica Standard 49

Illustration: A girl in a kimono is holding drumsticks, poised to strike a Japanese drum.

Main Story: Arawi, having been given the PlayStation 2 game *Seaman*, immediately started playing it. *Seaman* used a voice recognition feature, allowing players to communicate with the half-human-half-fish Seaman by talking into a microphone. Arawi started playing and called out to Seaman, but he gradually became self-conscious. This was because he had gained an objective view of himself talking to a game character. He described his current situation of being alone, blushing and remaining silent, as "The goalkeeper doesn't move one step."

Helvetica Standard 50

Illustration: A chopstick wrapper with the logo "Helvetica (Standard)" printed on it.

Main Story: A girl who ordered ramen watched the waiter deliver the bowl with his finger submerged in the soup. The girl grimaced, complaining, "I'm losing my appetite..." but her face brightened the next moment. This was because, alongside the boiled egg, bamboo shoots, and roasted seaweed, a Shogi piece was floating in the ramen soup. "Keima (Knight)!" the girl cried out in surprise and joy.

Helvetica Standard!!! 51

A young man who was drift driving accidentally ran over a person while the tires were skidding. The victim lay face up with X-marked eyes, and the young man driving the car turned pale. However, the reason the young man was horrified was not the accident itself. A single pear had landed on top of the flipped victim's feet. The young man grumbled at this miraculous situation: "Beginner's luck, huh."

Helvetica Standard 52-dayo ("52, you know")

Illustration: A deformed illustration of angel Pino and Sankaku.

Main Story: Arawi, who planned to launch the free paper *Mogura*, declared himself editor-in-chief and began gathering contributors. However, the editor-in-chief, who was getting carried away with his own idea, received a phone call that brought him back to reality. Mr. M, whom he had invited to write a column, bluntly stated, "I'm extremely anxious about you being in charge, Arawi-san." The sullen Arawi burrowed under his futon.

Helvetica Standard 53

In 2004, following the social issue of Mad Cow Disease (BSE) in the United States, Japan suspended the import of US beef. As a result, beef bowl (gyūdon) sales were canceled across almost all restaurants. However, the beef bowl chain Sukiya solved the problem by switching its beef imports to Australia and resumed serving beef bowl in September of that year.

Against this social backdrop, a female student speaks to a male student with a dejected expression. "It was delicious. It had been a long time, you know. I ignored the accompanying miso soup and polished it off like a demon god... A demon god. Heh heh, it's hilarious." The female student had eagerly gone to Sukiya after hearing the news of the gyūdon revival. However, despite the beef bowl tasting excellent, she was inexplicably muttering self-deprecating words. The reason lay in a small mistake she made after the meal. After finishing the gyūdon, the female student, as usual, attempted to clean her teeth with a toothpick. However, the spot where toothpicks were kept in that Sukiya inexplicably held the "Legendary Excalibur." Not expecting to find a legendary weapon there, the female student made the mistake of cleaning between her teeth with the Excalibur, mistaking it for a toothpick.

Helvetica Standard 54

A woman suffering from insomnia was consulting her general practitioner. Based on the consultation, the doctor diagnosed the cause as excessive computer use. The woman, who seemed to know the reason, replied weakly. The doctor then encouraged her, saying, "It's alright, you'll get better soon," and said he would prescribe a strong medicine, pulling out a DVD. The doctor intended to reduce her computer time by giving her a cinematic masterpiece instead of medicine. The DVD was the film *Innocence*, directed by Mamoru Oshii, which had been released recently (September 15, 2004). Furthermore, the doctor pressed the issue by recommending the classic Famicom role-playing game *Kaijū Monogatari* to the woman. Faced with the doctor's suggestion, which seemed to put the cart before the horse, the woman could only reply weakly.

Helvetica Standard 55
Illustration: A girl in a Buddhist robe is flustered as a dog gnaws at the area around her hakama (trousers) near her feet.
Main Story: October 9, 2004. Folk singer Masato Tomobe was scheduled to perform a live show at the La Caña live space in Shimokitazawa. However, Typhoon No. 22 directly hit the Kanto region that day. Battling the sideways rain, Arawi managed to reach the venue.

Arawi was relieved to learn that the concert would proceed as scheduled. However, as soon as he sat down in the audience, he was overcome by sleepiness. The combination of his all-nighter the previous day and the soothing music caused him to fall into a deep sleep.

When he finally woke up, the concert was almost over, and the final song was being played. Arawi instinctively cried out, "Hekō!" (The sound of disappointment), and flipped over in his seat.

Helvetica Standard 56: Kuroneko no Sankaku (黒猫の三角, "Black Cat's Triangle")
Illustration: An illustration of a black cat with a square-pyramidal body. The title is likely derived from Hiroshi Mori's novel of the same name, *Kuro Neko no Sankaku* (Black Cat's Triangle).
Main Story: A young man, on a whim, bought an entire box of Marukawa's bubble gum (commonly known as 10-yen gum). The gum, which featured Felix the Cat on the package, came in a box of 60 pieces, which the young man finished in a single day.

Helvetica Standard 57: Helvetica no Kakikata #1 (ヘルベチカの描き方①, "How to Draw Helvetica #1")
(Note: This chapter is in an unconventional format, with Arawi's essay text accompanied by an illustration and a single panel manga.)
Illustration: A girl picking up a cigarette and a one-eyed ghost with an ashtray on its head.
Text: *"First, I go shopping at the neighborhood FamilyMart (convenience store). I buy a pack of five chocolate buns, and then I buy cheap unsweetened coffee at Seiyu (supermarket). Even though the Seibu Lions won, the milk wasn't on sale. I head straight into Book Off (used bookstore) and start reading Oishinbo standing up. I make sure not to miss the in-store commercial by Kuniaki Shimizu. I hear he knows absolutely everything. But I try not to listen to him. (Out of consideration.) I leave the store, pull a cigarette from my pocket, but remember I'm in a no-smoking zone on the street, and return it to my pocket. My existence is no longer permitted even one angstrom on the street. I arrive home, take out paper, and start drawing panels in a non-smoking zone. After I finish inking, I take out a cigarette. I light it with a Zippo,*

take two puffs, and then flick my pent-up feelings onto the non-smoking zone I just drew. That's how a Helvetica Standard is completed."
Single Panel Manga: An illustration of Arawi flicking ash from his cigarette onto the designated on-street non-smoking zone mentioned in the text.

Helvetica Standard 58: Shūmatsu no Hanashi (週末の話, "Weekend Story")

Arawi was walking through the drinking district of Kichijōji with his friend Sound-san (Illustrator Oto Yoshida) during the weekend (October 30–31). The scenery of Kichijōji, seen by the two, was full of opticians, just like the scene in Yoshiharu Tsuge's manga Nejishiki, where the protagonist wanders into an area dense with eye doctors.

Arawi, having entered a reasonably priced izakaya, listened to Sound-san talk about how, "Even Kagawa Prefecture residents chew their udon, they don't slurp it down," all while worrying about Sound-san's feet. The Sound-san character in this manga was using the design of Bikko-san, a one-legged character created by Oto Yoshida, and had to change the bandage on his leg every hour.

Afterward, Arawi, stumbling tipsily, returned home and fell into a deep sleep. When he woke up the next morning, mixed vegetables he had bought on the way home were scattered all over the floor.

Helvetica Standard 59

Past 1:00 AM. Arawi was, again, diligently drawing manga in his room. However, sleepiness overtook him, and his consciousness became intermittent.

After dozing off and swaying for a while, he let out a silent scream. In his drowsiness, he had accidentally stained the manuscript paper with the dip pen he was holding in his right hand. Arawi lamented his mistake in the margin of the manga: "This pen movement is unbelievable, isn't it?!"

Helvetica Standard 60

Illustration: A Second Class Angel is riding on a rock-shaped creature that walks on four legs. A sticker reading "Akafuku" (Ise's famous mochi sweets coated with sweet bean paste) is pasted on the creature's head. The Second Class Angel is saying, "It doesn't matter if I'm an angel or not. I just have to subscribe to Raffaello." Raffaello refers to the art magazine *Raffaello*.
Main Story 1: Arawi was visiting used bookstores in Iidabashi, where his office was located, and Asagaya, near his home, as part of his manga drawing studies. One day, while standing and

reading Manga Michi at Book Off, he screamed upon finding a bug pressed between the pages like a dried flower.

Main Story 2: With Comitia 70 approaching in November, Arawi began conceptualizing a new manga. Just then, Maeda-kun approached him and said, "Arawi-san, haven't you started drawing yet? Actually, neither have I." Maeda-kun was also eager to participate in Comitia.

Arawi made a fuss upon learning that his close friend was participating in the convention, but Maeda-kun ignored him.

Helvetica Standard 61: Comitia 70 no Ohanashi (コミティア 70 のおはなし, "The Story of Comitia 70")

Young men and women were gossiping about Arawi's works distributed at Comitia 70. They were disparaging the fact that both his new manga, *Milestone*, and his free paper, *Shouwa. Ichi*, contained typographical errors.

Arawi, who overheard this, had nowhere to hide. He could only perform a full dogeza (kneeling apology) while carrying the local magazine *Tōkyōjin* on his back. Furthermore, upon hearing the pair chuckle, "How do you make a page mistake in an offset-printed book?", Arawi wrote a dying message, "Love," and collapsed. (Note: This episode refers to the fact that *Milestone* had the page numbers for pages 8 and 9 reversed, misspelled the word jishin (自信, "confidence") as jishin (自身, "self"), and *Shouwa. Ichi* misspelled Shūji Terayama (寺山修司) as Shūji Terayama (寺山修二) in the original Japanese text.)

Helvetica Standard 62

Arawi, worried about the typographical errors in Milestone, decided to go on a journey. A young boy tried to stop him, but Arawi left the spot, saying, "I can no longer live in this town."

"Where are you going?" the boy asked. "A part of the jungle in the Congo, a place always covered in clouds where satellite photos cannot be taken," Arawi replied as he walked away. "The Heavy Smoker's Forest!" the boy exclaimed in shock.

The boy's surprise was understandable. The Heavy Smoker's Forest was the fictional African place name that appears in the movie *Doraemon: Nobita and the Haunts of Evil.*

Helvetica Standard: Ul-Tech 63 (ウルテク 63)

Illustration: Arawi (the girl) is sitting deep in a round cushion.

Main Story: Arawi was visiting used bookstores in search of his nostalgic game magazine, *Family Computer Magazine.* After searching several stores, he was lucky enough to find the magazine he was looking for (February 19, 1988 issue), but he couldn't bring himself to buy it immediately. This was because it had an exorbitant premium price tag.

Arawi considered that he would be more satisfied buying a large stack of manga volumes at Book Off for the same price. He started to pull away from the old magazine.

However, as he left the used bookstore, he inexplicably bought the expensive old magazine, contrary to his original intention. To make matters worse, he also bought another magazine sold alongside it, *Marukatsu Famicom*.

Realizing his wallet only held enough money for the train ride home, Arawi was overwhelmed with regret. He immersed himself in his regret, poetically muttering that he felt the late autumn wind sting his eyes.

Helvetica Standard 64

A one-eyed ghost who was visiting a young man's house listened to the young man's past story. In high school, the young man and his friend created a dōjinshi manga magazine based on *Manga Michi*. The work they completed was a full-fledged suspense story that used the characters from *Manga Michi* in a secondary creation format.

"Wow, we made something incredible," the young men thought and decided they wanted everyone to read their masterpiece. So, they decided to sandwich the dōjinshi inside magazines sold at bookstores. They figured that if they promoted it like an extra magazine appendix, more people would pick it up.

"So, did everyone get to see it?" the one-eyed ghost asked.

"We got caught by the security guard," the young man said while exhaling cigarette smoke.

Helvetica Standard 65: Install a " TONGARI corn" in a finger!!! no Maki (Install a " TONGARI corn" in a finger!!!の巻, "The Chapter of Install a 'Tongari Corn' in a finger!!!")

Illustration: A girl holding a box-shaped remote control is operating a gigantic robot with a human-like head and hands.

Main Story: A man stares blankly at his right hand and tells a woman, "Tongari Corn won't fit on my finger." The snack Tongari Corn had a conical shape with a hollow center, allowing people to play by wearing them on their five fingers like claws.

However, the man, having grown into an adult, could no longer fit the Tongari Corn on his fingers. The man was disheartened by the fact that he could no longer be a child.

Helvetica Standard 66: Nichijou #1 (日常①, "Everyday Life #1")
The robot girl, Shinonome C-Gengo, transfers to high school as a female student. However, her true identity is immediately discovered by those around her. The large screw key (winding key) that her developer, the Professor, installed on her back gave her away as a robot.

"Because of this, I was exposed as a robot immediately on the first day of my transfer! It's hard to sit down, and people crowd around me," C-Gengo complained.

"The wind-up key is cuter, but if you're going to be found out, there's nothing to be done," the Professor decided to replace C-Gengo's power source from the screw key to a small DC motor. When C-Gengo asked if it would be okay, the Professor vouched for it, saying, "Because it's made by Mabuchi Motor."

Helvetica Standard 67: Nichijou #2 (日常②, "Everyday Life #2")
"How did it go? Did you manage to hide it?" the Professor asked C-Gengo, inquiring whether her identity as a robot was revealed. C-Gengo, whose screw key was replaced with a small motor, was not revealed based on her appearance. However, she complained that a different problem had occurred: the "function that automatically puts furigana (pronunciation aids) on the kanji in the speech bubble," which the Professor had installed with good intentions, made her stand out.

"I was told that I'm the only one in school with furigana," C-Gengo spoke with dialogue that had furigana on every word.

Hearing this, the Professor was surprised that high school students didn't need furigana and immediately tried to remove the function. But before doing that, the Professor suggested they take out the kotatsu (heated table) because it was chilly. C-Gengo cheerfully agreed, saying, "That's a great idea!" and her face brightened.

Helvetica Standard 68: Nichijou #3 (日常③, "Everyday Life #3")
The Professor pulled the kotatsu out of the closet and warmed herself with C-Gengo. "Why did you name me 'C-Gengo'?" C-Gengo asked a sudden question. "Well, it was just random," the Professor replied indifferently, leaning on the kotatsu table.

The two watched TV for a while, and they became engrossed in a drama program they were casually watching. A housewife, reminiscent of *Sazae-san*, was being propositioned by the delivery boy from Mikawaya Liquor Store while her husband was away. The two young girls, blushing at the adult romance, stared intently at the TV screen.

Helvetica Standard 69
Illustration: A man wearing a fur pilot's cap is smoking a cigarette.
Main Story: December 6. Arawi invited his friends Maeda-kun and Mitomi-shi (Takuya Mitomi) to his house for the first editorial meeting for the free paper *Mogura*. During the meeting, Mitomi-shi showed off a matchbox that had his illustration printed on the package. Arawi felt a surge of professional jealousy at the quality of the matchbox and, feigning superiority, said he didn't need it because he used a Zippo lighter for cigarettes.

However, Mitomi-shi refused to back down, saying, "The trend now is matches!" and promised to create a new matchbox with Arawi's illustration.

A few days later, a matchbox with Arawi's illustration printed on it was delivered from Mitomi-shi. Arawi was excited but insisted, "If I admit this is great, I lose!" However, when he lit a cigarette with the match, an overwhelming feeling came over him that made his stubbornness feel silly. "This enveloping sense of happiness, this taste—it's not tobacco, this thing I'm smoking now is... that's right! It's romance!!!" Arawi savored the special taste of the cigarette.

Helvetica Standard 70: Nichijou #4 (日常④, "Everyday Life #4")
After high school classes ended, C-Gengo was summarizing her notes when a classmate girl started a conversation. "I think the 'C' in Shinonome-san's 'C-Gengo' stands for the 'C' in Hiroshima Carp," the girl said, presenting her theory with an innocent smile.

"No, 'C-Gengo' is her whole name," C-Gengo replied.

"Oh, I thought 'C' was her middle name. But that's cool." A girl with glasses watched the slightly detached conversation of the two from afar, beads of cold sweat running down her face. She held her breath, worried that the meeting between the robot girl and the innocent girl might lead to some incredible chemical reaction.

Helvetica Standard 71
Illustration: A sharp-eyed girl is holding a square box labeled "Clap" tied with a rope.
Main Story: Arawi suddenly decided to install a "Web Clap" feature on Himarayairuka. Web clap was a service that allowed website visitors to send anonymous feedback. However, Arawi started having dark thoughts that no one would send any feedback. The anxiety accumulated that day, and he couldn't fall asleep easily.

The next day, he nervously checked Himarayairuka and saw that several comments had arrived. He felt relieved, but upon closer inspection, among the messages of support and contact from acquaintances, one strange entry was posted. Someone had simply written the weather forecast: "Cloudy, later rain."

Startled by the completely unexpected content, he murmured, "So that's how they came at me."

Helvetica Standard 72: Kōnyū (購入, "Purchase")

"...What is this... I'm scared..." A frightened female student said, her voice barely audible. "This is... this is the freedom we wanted..." The male student next to her said with a meaningful tone. In front of the two was a "Finger Dip Pen." This pen, unlike a regular dip pen for manga, had a tip shaped like a human right index finger pointing up. The male and female students were terrified by the profoundness of this pen they had bought at a stationery store.

Helvetica Standard 73 from thank you for the music!!

In 2007, Arawi was playing an online match of the soccer game Winning Eleven with his close friend (Sawada). However, he suffered a crushing defeat with an "unbelievable score difference," causing him to shed tears over his own inadequacy.

Overwhelmed with frustration, Arawi declared, "I'm never playing Winning Eleven again." But his friend coolly brushed him off, saying, "Aww, that's sad." This was the third time Arawi had declared he was quitting Winning Eleven. Therefore, his friend assumed that Arawi would start playing again once he calmed down.

Arawi stubbornly vowed he would never play a game again. However, in the present (2008), Arawi was, as usual, playing Winning Eleven with his friend.

In the end, just as his friend predicted, Arawi was stuck in a cycle of losing a game, declaring he would quit, and then resuming the game shortly after.

Milestone (マイルストーン) - Published November 2004

◆ A story of a girl aspiring to be a manga artist who breaks ties with others in her mental world and resolves to create her own unique work.

A girl was gazing at the vast landscape stretching out before her. In her line of sight, gigantic manga drawing tools were clustered together. Dip pens, ink bottles, white-out, technical pens, rulers, French curves, and paintbrushes—the drawing tools were like a towering mountain range, clearly visible even from afar.

The scene before her was surreal and irrational. But the girl accepted it as natural, knowing that what she was seeing was a scene from her mindscape. This was the reality of the world: the image of colossal manga tools and herself, envisioned by an aspiring manga artist.

After a while, the one-eyed Ghost standing beside her spoke up. "Well, is it something like this?"

The Ghost surveyed the mindscape and urged the girl to walk toward the distant manga tools. The Ghost knew well the girl's true desire to pursue the manga artist's dream = the location of the manga tools.

However, the girl lacked the courage to move forward. She hesitated, saying, "But there's nowhere to walk, I can't move forward." The girl was physically stranded on a small platform, a "floating stone" about the size of half a tatami mat, and could not move from the spot. This "floating stone" was a reflection of her anxiety about whether she could truly become a manga artist.

"That's because you think there's nowhere to walk," the Ghost encouraged her, saying that since this was a world the girl had imagined, a path would naturally emerge if she just believed she could step forward.

But the girl still couldn't shake off the anxiety. Since this was a mindscape, it wouldn't be strange if the first step led to a bottomless swamp or a sea of sulfuric acid. She could only voice her despair, saying she couldn't possibly take a step forward.

The Ghost sighed at the indecisive girl, and suddenly, a single tree sprouted from its head. The Ghost said that this tree was a symbol of "the things you've accumulated while taking detours."

The girl, in the real world, had gained skills and experience to become a manga artist, even though she took many detours. While anxiety was reflected in her mindscape, confidence had also entered this world, taking the form of a single tree.

The Ghost spurred her on further with a pun: "The wood is already this ripe. Please, do not be afraid."

Moved by the Ghost's words, the girl gathered her courage and took one step off the "floating stone." Just then, a wooden bridge appeared where there had been nothing. Crossing this bridge seemed to lead to the destination where the manga tools were located.

"It is your will. If you realize 'I can walk,' then look—the path keeps extending. That's just how it is," the Ghost continued.

The wooden bridge built in the mindscape and the girl advancing across it clearly represented her breaking through her anxiety and seriously moving forward on the path of a manga artist.

"I can move forward faster and faster now," the girl, walking straight toward her dream of a manga artist, moved with a light step.

"This is what happens when you engage the first gear," the Ghost replied.

As the girl and the Ghost continued walking, they encountered a male student standing in their path. The student, dressed in a school uniform, was reading a thick book while sitting seiza style on a tatami mat.

The male student noticed the girl, stood up, commanding "Attention," and spoke to her. His words were directed at the girl's past self, who often fell into laziness or made excuses while chasing the dream of a manga artist.

"*To you who can see far away but yield to the flow. To you who just sit at the crossroads. To you who say things but don't follow through. To you who realize a week has passed. To you who decide your rank in two or three days. To you who immediately blame an illness you don't even have.*" The student then challenged the girl, saying, "*To you who harbor doubts about that single step. Hey...*"

The girl closed her eyes, ruminating on the student's sharp words, and responded, "Yeah, I'm okay." For the girl, who had solidified her resolve to become a manga artist, the male student's words were no longer painful admonishment.

Having heard her answer, the student stopped blocking her way. He then pointed to the path leading to the destination where the colossal manga tools stood.

"Please, you may proceed. The flowers bloom, the fruit ripens, and eventually bursts, but also surely, the seed is there," the student said, seeing the girls off.

A long time passed after they started walking. The sun set, and the sky was filled with stars. The girl and the Ghost paused to rest, captivated by the twinkling stars. Just then, a voice called out from behind, "Could you spare a light?" Startled, the girl turned around to see the faceless man wearing a one-eyed mask.

"Sorry, sorry, I didn't mean to startle you," the faceless man asked for a light again, gesturing as if smoking a cigarette.

The girl, flustered, said she didn't have anything to make a fire. The faceless man then nonchalantly took out a matchbox and puffed out smoke.

"Oh, you have fire after all," the girl frowned at the man's provocative behavior.

"Well, I do have fire," the faceless man replied indifferently. He then expounded on the nature of this mindscape.

"I am dozens, hundreds of others than you think. I am dozens, hundreds of others." The faceless man revealed that his true identity was the materialized image of the "multitude of others" as seen from the girl's perspective. He then indirectly criticized the girl.

"Are you still comparing yourself to others? If others are involved, that's what it means. If so, you are still unaware. You and others can sympathize and influence each other, but you are never the same."

This statement can be interpreted as follows: The girl aspiring to be a professional manga artist needed to grasp her dream through her own unwavering will, without being swayed by anyone else. This meant the image of her mindscape should have been one of her walking alone toward the destination lined with colossal manga tools.

Despite this, the girl allowed the faceless man to intervene in her mindscape. The man's true identity was the symbol of the multitude of others—or more accurately, the other artists already active on the front lines. The girl was unconsciously comparing herself to others when pursuing her manga artist dream, losing confidence all by herself. The faceless man pointed this out, admonishing her for not thoroughly pursuing "how to keep herself."

"I, too, am talking about not being able to catch a big fish in your territory. It's not that I want to fish or anything, but the question is how to keep yourself within that. Even if you can connect the lines to form a shape, ultimately, the coordinate is just one."

The girl, having received the warning, became lost in thought. The faceless man, in turn, advised her not to seek an answer immediately but to think about it overnight and get some sleep.

Lying on her back, the stars in the night sky leaped into her eyes. The heavens were vast, the starlight gentle, and the girl fell into a comfortable sleep.

The next morning. When the girl woke up, the faceless man had already vanished from the spot. And the Ghost had transformed into a wooden ornament. In other words, a situation had been created where only the girl existed in her mindscape.

The gigantic manga tools still towered in the distance, and the girl was determined to begin her solitary march toward the destination. She had finally resolved to pursue her manga artist dream solely by her own will, without being swayed by anyone else.

The girl, having committed to her resolve, felt little anxiety in her solitude and, instead, wore a bold smile. Taking a deep breath, she let out a shout:

"The coordinate had disappeared with the morning, but I remained. I shouted my self, and laughed at the left sky." With this monologue, the story concludes.

Hirake!(開けっ！, "Open It!") - Published August 2006

◆ A story of a girl aspiring to be a writer who confirms her true feelings through a dialogue with her other self and resolves to move forward for the sake of her own dream.

It was the afternoon after the start of the second semester. A girl was walking home from school, lost in thought.

(I feel somehow disconnected, like I'm about to go to a world other than home right now.) The girl, a high school senior, needed to decide her future career path soon. But she struggled to decide whether to go to university, get a job, or pursue another road. The anxiety of not knowing who she should become was assaulting her as an uncomfortable sensation.

"What do you want to do?" her inner mind asked.

"I have tons of things I want to do, but I don't want to study in university, and I don't want to start working right after graduation..." Despite the question coming from herself, the girl hesitated.

"What do you want to do?" the inner mind asked the same question again.

"No, because I'm not smart, and I have zero language skills, and I have no talent, so I should just be a bystander as a hobby..."

"What do you want to do?"

"I want to be a writer." When her inner mind asked the question for the third time, she finally revealed her true feelings. The girl had held the dream of becoming a writer from the beginning. However, she had always denied that dream, convincing herself that she couldn't possibly become one.

The reason the girl hadn't planned her future until now was that she was caught between the image of the future she wanted and the realistic value system that forced her to abandon it.

Even after confessing her true feelings, the girl remained indecisive. Then, the next moment, she was caught up in a strange event: another girl, with the exact same appearance as her, suddenly materialized before her eyes. It seemed that the inner voice she had been debating with had become real and appeared before her.

"Why do you want to be a writer?" the other girl continued to question.

The girl reflected on her reasons for aspiring to be a writer: "I spent most of my youth in middle and high school in the library, and without making any friends I could call close, I just devoured books. For someone like me who can't stick to anything for long, reading was the only thing that remained when I noticed it."

The girl continued to explain why she viewed reading as special: it allowed her to summon naked emotions. "If emotions are the driving force that moves everything, then books are the source from which those emotions well up for me."

The girl believed that the core of her world was made up of emotions (joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure). Therefore, the experience of reading, which stirred her emotions, was the most important thing.

It didn't take long for such a girl to wish to move the hearts of others through the works she created. The reason she wanted to be a writer was to allow other readers to experience the same emotion-awakening experience she had.

However, the girl's resolve did not last long. Once she started creating works, she was acutely aware of her lack of talent. Before completing any work, she gave up with a cynical remark: "The world I imagined is laughably far away..."

"Even if I wrote something, who is going to read it, anyway? And even if I showed it, I'm destined to be severely criticized and tossed away. I know, I know, I know, so I won't do it. This is the smart way." The girl, who had happily discussed her core experience with reading, was pessimistic about the dream of becoming a writer. She willingly tried to abandon the path she desperately wanted to pursue.

In response, the other girl, who had been listening silently, asked a simple question: "You haven't even finished writing it yet, have you? You've self-concluded that you 'know,' and that's 'The End'? The truth is you 'know that you don't know,' don't you?"

"What's wrong with saying I don't know what I don't know?" The girl, feeling attacked, was flustered but lashed out in anger.

"It's my problem too, you know," the other girl continued calmly.

"It's not like being a writer is the only path! Why are you so set on it!!"

"I just told you, didn't I? That you know that you don't know."

"Shut up! Given my status!! Who's going to guarantee my safety!!"

"But in the end, are you going to lie to your own feelings..."

"Shut up!!!" The girl screamed, but the other girl continued to stare at her with a serious expression. The girl, conceding defeat, finally confessed the true feelings she had suppressed: "I'm afraid. I'm afraid of being betrayed by the books I've loved. I'm afraid of my emotions being broken. That's why I want to remain a bystander." Tears streamed from the girl's eyes, and her words fell away like running water.

I read freely and happily until now. Isn't that enough? A dream like being a writer is far away, and even if I try to reach it, I might fail. No, I'm sure I will fail. If that's the case, "Why do I have to run such an immense distance, a distance that might be wasted?" The girl's delicate words expressed her honest, unvarnished feelings.

In response, the other self acknowledged the girl's feelings but pointed out one thing that was wrong:

"That immense distance is just one step."

Let's consider the paradox stated by the other girl: the path to becoming a professional writer, which seems like an "immense distance," is actually "one step."

The other girl told her that she had convinced herself that the journey to success was an "immense distance." If the definition of a writer was being acknowledged by a large number of readers, the distance between her and a professional writer would indeed be endless.

However, the girl wanted to be a writer to share naked emotions with others. She didn't necessarily need mass acceptance. Therefore, to achieve her dream, she should focus on not being swayed by the readers and not losing sight of her own emotions.

The direction she should walk toward her dream is not toward the crowd of others, but inward, toward her own heart. She should concentrate only on creating books that would be enjoyed, delighted in, and bring tears to "the self standing one step next to the work," not to someone who is an "immense distance" away.

Moved by these words, the girl had an epiphany: "The source of emotion was next to the book—me." She then stepped toward her other self, who had always been by her side. This action suggested that, having overcome her hesitation, she had found the belief that she should write books that she herself could enjoy and would confidently proceed on the path to becoming a professional writer.

The girl's monologue continues: "I guess I ended up progressing, is my thought, and I can't lie to myself is also my thought. If this is the case, I want to see what lies beyond this emotion, even if just a little."

Anxiety had been removed from the girl's heart. In its place was a curiosity about what awaited her next. The dream of being a writer, the source of her emotions, the unseen work she would create—the "unknowable" she had feared was transformed by curiosity into something mysteriously appealing.

"And if you're curious, you have no choice but to go!!!" The girl's journey was just beginning. But she sensed the existence of a virtual door: a door that was not visible now, but one that surely led to another world. A door that opened to the unknown world that would appear as she continued down the writer's path and created her own works.

To proceed beyond the door, the girl whispers, "Ready, set—" It goes without saying that the word that follows this cue is the title of the work.

Major Works That Influenced Arawi

Legend (In order of appearance in the main text)

Title: Medium, Artist/Author Name, Production Company/Publisher/Broadcaster (*Name at the time of release), Release Year/Broadcast Year (Japan)

Prologue

- *Famicom Tsūshin* (later *Famitsu*): Video Game Magazine, ASCII, 1986–
- *Vana'diel Taizaiki: Final Fantasy XI Play Nikki* (ヴァナ・ディール滞在記 ファイナルファンタジーXI プレイ日記, "Records of a Stay in Vana'diel: Final Fantasy XI Play Dairy"): Game Review, Yasuhiro Nagata, Enterbrain, 2003
- *Final Fantasy XI*: Online Game, Square, 2002
- *Knight Lore*: Video Game (MSX), Jaleco, 1986
- *Mother 1+2*: Video Game (Game Boy Advance), Nintendo, 2003
- *Pocket ni "Mother".*: Game Review, Yasuhiro Nagata, Hobonichi (Tokyo Itoi Shigesato Office), 2003
- *Mother* (The official title in the United States is *EarthBound Begginings*): Video Game (Family Computer), Nintendo, 1989
- *Dragon Quest IV* (The official title in the United States is *Dragon Warrior IV*): Video Game (Family Computer), Enix, 1990

I. Primaly Experiences #1

- *Pro Yakyū Family Stadium* (プロ野球ファミリースタジアム, The official title in the United States is *R.B.I. Baseball*): Video Game (Family Computer), Namco, 1986
- *Fushigi no Dungeon: Fūrai no Shiren 2: Oni Shūrai! Shiren-jō!* (不思議のダンジョン 風来のシレン 2 鬼襲来！シレン城！, "Mystery Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer 2 - Oni Invasion! Shiren Castle!"): Video Game (Nintendo 64), Chunsoft, 2000
- *Super Mario Bros.*: Video Game (Family Computer), Nintendo, 1985
- *Barefoot Gen* (はだしのゲン): Manga, Keiji Nakazawa, Choubunsha, 1973–1987
- *Bio Miracle Bokutte Upa* (バイオミラクルぼくってウパ): Video Game (Famicom Disk System), Konami, 1988
- *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure*: Manga, Hirohiko Araki, Shueisha, 1986–
- "Nichijou"(日常): Manga, Hiro-chan (Arawi's relative), Self-produced, Early 1990s
- "Bolt Quest" (ボルトクエスト): Card Game, Hiro-chan, Self-produced, Late 1980s
- Gunma-chan: Noboru Baba, 1983

- *Kitsune Mori no Yama Otoko* (きつね森の山男, "The Mountain Man of Fox Forest"): Picture Book, Noboru Baba, Koguma Publishing, 1963
- *11 Piki no Neko* (11 ぴきのねこ, "Eleven Cats"): Picture Book, Noboru Baba, Koguma Publishing, 1967
- *11 Piki no Neko Fukuro no Naka* (11 ぴきのねこ ふくろのなか, "Eleven Cats in a Bag"): Picture Book, Noboru Baba, Koguma Publishing, 1982
- *Obake no Q-tarō* (オバケのＱ太郎, "Little Ghost Q-Taro"): Anime (TV), Original by Fujiko Fujio, Shin-Ei Animation, 1985–1986
- *Plonsters*: Claymation (TV), Directed by Alexander Zapletal, Anima Studio für Film & Grafik GmbH / Pony Canyon, 1987–1988
- Various Sanrio Character Goods: Sanrio, 1980s
- *Karasu no Pan'ya-san* (からすのぱんやさん, "Mr. Crow's Bakery"): Picture Book, Satoshi Kako, Kaisei-sha, 1973
- *Uchū* (宇宙, "The Universe"): Picture Book, Satoshi Kako, Fukuinkan Shoten, 1978
- *Daruma-chan to Tengu-chan* (だるまちゃんとてんぐちゃん, "Little Daruma and Little Tengu"): Picture Book, Satoshi Kako, Fukuinkan Shoten, 1967
- *Where's Waldo?*: Picture Book, Martin Handford, Froebel-kan, 1987
- *Weekly Shōnen Jump*: Manga Magazine, Shueisha, 1969–
- *Dr. Slump*: Manga, Akira Toriyama, Shueisha, 1980–1984
- *Dragon Ball*: Manga, Akira Toriyama, Shueisha, 1984–1995
- *Shiawase no Katachi* (しあわせのかたち, "The Shape of Happiness"): Manga, Tamakichi Sakura, ASCII, 1986–1994
- *Dragon Quest III*: Video Game (Family Computer), Enix, 1988
- *Mashin Hero Wataru* (魔神英雄伝ワタル): Anime (TV), Sunrise, 1988–1989
- *Ranma 1/2*: Anime (TV), Original by Rumiko Takahashi, Studio Deen, 1989–1992
- *Takeda Shingen* (武田信玄): Video Game (Family Computer), Hot-B, 1988
- *Monthly CoroCoro Comic*: Manga Magazine, Shogakukan, 1977–
- *Monthly Comic BonBon*: Manga Magazine, Kodansha, 1981–2007
- *Bikkuriman: Devil vs Angel Seals* (ビックリマン 悪魔 vs 天使シール): Collectible Stickers, Lotte, 1985–1992
- *SD Gundam*: Character Goods, Sunrise, 1985–
- *Necros no Yōsai* (ネクロスの要塞, "Fortress of Necros"): Candy Toy (Shokugan), Lotte, 1986

I. Primaly Experiences #2

- *Give Me a Break* (ギミア・ぶれいく): Variety Show, TBS, 1989–1992
- *Manryū Copy-juku* (萬流コピー塾, "The All-Purpose Copywriting School"): Reader Submission Project, Shigesato Itoi, Bungeishunju, 1983–1988

- *Canossa no Kutsujoku* (カノッサの屈辱, "The Humiliation of Canossa"): Variety Show, Fuji TV, 1990–1991
- *Utsurun Desu.* (伝染るんです。): Manga, Sensha Yoshida, Shogakukan, 1989–1994
- *Kishitani Gorō no Tokyo Radio Club* (岸谷五朗の東京 RADIO CLUB, "Gorō Kishitani's Tokyo Radio Club"): Radio Program, TBS Radio, 1990–1994
- *Hayashibara Megumi no Tokyo Boogie Night* (林原めぐみの Tokyo Boogie Night, "Megumi Hayashibara's Tokyo Boogie Night"): Radio Program, TBS Radio, 1992–
- *Kayō Junk: Bakushō Mondai Cowboy* (火曜 JUNK 爆笑問題カーボーイ, "Tuesday Junk: Bakushō Mondai Cowboy"): Radio Program, TBS Radio, 1997–
- *Cream Stew no All Night Nippon* (くりぃむしちゅーのオールナイトニッポン, "Crew Stew's All Night Nippon"): Radio Program, Nippon Broadcasting System, 2005–2008
- *Miyake Yūji no Young Paradise* (三宅裕司のヤングパラダイス, "Yūji Miyake's Young Paradise"): Radio Program, Nippon Broadcasting System, 1984–1990

I. So Many Things I Want to Do #1

- *Virtua Fighter*: Video Game (Arcade), Sega, 1993
- *Neon Genesis Evangelion*: Anime, Directed by Hideaki Anno, Gainax, 1995
- *Tenchi Muyo! Ryo-Ohki*: Anime (OVA), AIC, 1992–1995
- *Nadia: The Secret of Blue Water*: Anime (TV), Directed by Hideaki Anno, Gainax, 1990–1991
- *Castle in the Sky*: Theatrical Anime, Directed by Hayao Miyazaki, Studio Ghibli, 1986
- *Kosuke-sama Rikimaru-sama: Konpeitō no Ryū* (小助さま力丸さま コンペイ島の竜, "Kosuke-sama Rikimaru-sama: The Dragon of Konpei Island"): Anime (OVA), J.C.Staff, 1989
- *Mobile Police Patlabor*: Anime (OVA/Theatrical), Produced by Headgear, Studio Deen/Sunrise/IG Tatsunoko, 1988–1993
- *Mobile Suit SD Gundam*: Anime (OVA/Theatrical), Sunrise, 1988–1993
- *Uchū Kazoku Carlvinson* (宇宙家族カールビンソン, "Space Family Carlvinson"): Anime (OVA), Original by Yoshitoh Asari, Doga Kobo, 1988
- *Monthly Newtype*: Anime Magazine, Kadokawa Shoten, 1985–
- *Dengeki PC Engine*: Game Magazine, MediaWorks, 1992–1996
- *Megami Paradise*: Reader Submission Project, MediaWorks, 1993–1997
- *Bakushō Booing*: Variety Show, Kansai TV, 1993–1996
- *Sungē! Best 10* (すんげー！Best 10, "Awesome! Best 10"): Variety Show, ABC TV, 1995–1997
- *Kato-chan Ken-chan Gokigen TV*: Variety Show, TBS, 1986–1992
- *Tamori no Vocabula Tengoku* (タモリのボキャブラ天国, "Tamori's Vocabulary Heaven"): Variety Show, Fuji TV, 1992–1997

I. So Many Things I Want to Do #2

- *Downtown no Gottsu Ee Kanji* (ダウンタウンのごっつええ感じ, "Downtown's Feeling Real Good"): Variety Show, Fuji TV, 1991–1997
- *Owarai Kōjō Iinkai: Warawasero!* (お笑い向上委員会 笑わせろ！, "Comedy Improvement Committee: Make Them Laugh! "): Variety Show, TV Asahi, 1997–1998
- *Ōsama no Brunch* (王様のブランチ, "King’s Brunch"): Variety Show, TBS, 1996–
- *Open House*: Film, Directed by Isao Yukisada, Suplex, 1997 (General release in 2003)
- *La Ruban: The Murder Case of the SM Club Owner* (ラ・ルバン SM倶楽部オーナー殺人事件): V-Cinema, Directed by Shigeru Mori, Moo Factory, 1997

I. The Way of Manga #1

- *Medical Asahi*: Medical Magazine, The Asahi Shimbun Company, 1972–2016

I. The Way of Manga #2

- *Azumanga*: Manga, Kiyohiko Azuma, Pioneer LDC, 1998
- *Azumanga Daioh*: Manga, Kiyohiko Azuma, MediaWorks, 1999–2002
- *Yotsuba&!*: Manga, Kiyohiko Azuma, MediaWorks, 2003–
- *Uchū Chintai Sarugassō* (宇宙賃貸サルガッ荘, "Space Rental Sargasso"): Manga, TAGRO, Enix, 2001–2005
- *Aa Tantei Jimusho* (ああ探偵事務所, "Ah, Detective Agency"): Manga, Shunzo Sekizaki, Hakusensha, 2002–2008

II. The Eve of Comitia

- *Bōei Mangyoku Nikki* (防衛漫玉日記, "Defense Mangyoku Diary"): Manga, Tamakichi Sakura, Enterbrain, 1995–1997
- *Yūgen Mangyoku Nikki* (幽玄漫玉日記, "Yugen Mangyoku Diary"): Manga, Tamakichi Sakura, Enterbrain, 1998–2002
- *Frank*: Comic, Jim Woodring, Fantagraphics Books, 1996

II. Shiawase no Kakudo (The Angle of Happiness)

- "Happy End" (はっぴぃえんど): Song, Happy End, URC, 1970
- *In This Corner of the World*: Theatrical Anime, Original by Fumiyo Kouno / Directed by Sunao Katabuchi, MAPPA, 2016
- *Grave of the Fireflies*: Theatrical Anime, Original by Akiyuki Nosaka / Directed by Isao Takahata, Studio Ghibli, 1988
- *Saving Private Ryan*: Film, Directed by Steven Spielberg, Amblin Entertainment, 1998
- *Platoon*: Film, Directed by Oliver Stone, Orion Pictures, 1986

II. Hakoniwa (Miniature Garden)

- *Monthly Manga Garo*: Manga Magazine, Seirindō, 1964–2002
- *Jōnetsu no Penguin Gohan* (情熱のペンギンごはん, "Passionate Penguin Rice"): Manga, Original by Shigesato Itoi / Art by Teruhiko Yumura, Jōhō Center Publishing, 1980
- *Sakura Gahō: Eikyū Hozon-ban* (桜画報 永久保存版, "Sakura Illustrated: Eternal Preservation Edition"): Manga, Genpei Akasegawa, Seirindō, 1971
- *Rōjin-ryoku* (老人力, "Old Man Power"): Essay, Genpei Akasegawa, Chikuma Shobo, 1998
- *Chōgeijutsu Thomasson* (超芸術トマソン, "Hyperart Thomasson"): Field Report, Genpei Akasegawa, Byakuya Shobo, 1985
- *The Little Prince*: Novel, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Iwanami Shōnen Bunko, 1953
- *Disgaea: Hour of Darkness*: Video Game (PlayStation 2), Nippon Ichi Software, 2003
- *Gaspard et Lisa*: Picture Book, Story by Anne Gutman / Art by Georg Hallensleben, Bronze Publishing, 1999–

II. Inpū (Hidden Wind)

- *FLCL*: Anime (OVA), Directed by Kazuya Tsurumaki, Gainax, 2000–2001

II. Hane (Wing)

- *Parasyte*: Manga, Hitoshi Iwaaki, Kodansha, 1988–1995
- *Kokoro*: Novel, Natsume Sōseki, Iwanami Shoten, 1914

II. Machi (Town)

- *Kyūkyoku Chōjin R* (究極超人あ～る, "Ultimate Superhuman R"): Manga, Masami Yuki, Shogakukan, 1985–1987
- "Eien naru Mono" (永遠なるもの, "Eternal Thing"): Song, Kazuyoshi Nakamura, Mercury Records, 1997
- "Man in the Mirror": Music Video, Michael Jackson, 1988

III. Sasameyuki (Light Snow)

- *The Makioka Sisters* (Sasameyuki): Novel, Junichirō Tanizaki, Chūōkōron-sha, 1936–1941
- *Phoenix*: Manga, Osamu Tezuka, Mushi Pro Shoji et al., 1954–1988
- *Manga Michi* (まんが道, "The Way of Manga"): Fujiko Fujio A, Chūōkōron-sha et al., 1970–1988
- *Shin Takarajima* (新寶島, "New Treasure Island"): Original by Shichima Sakai / Art by Osamu Tezuka, Ikuei Shuppan, 1947

- *Tokiwa-sō no Seishun* (トキワ荘の青春, "The Tokiwa-sō Story"): Film, Directed by Jun Ichikawa, Culture Publishers, 1996
- *Sebangō 0* (背番号 0, "Jersey Number 0"): Manga, Hiroo Terada, Hōbunsha et al., 1956–1964

III. Anonymous

- *Sori Yanagi Essays* (柳宗理エッセイ): Essay, Sori Yanagi, Heibonsha, 2003
- *Miffy and the New Baby*: Picture Book, Dick Bruna, Fukuinkan Shoten, 2005
- *Caleb's Ride on Noah's Ark*: Picture Book, Dick Bruna, Fukuinkan Shoten, 1999

III. Kokoro (Heart)

- *Froth on the Daydream* (L'Écume des jours): Novel, Boris Vian, Shinchosha, 1970
- *The Sunday of Life* (Le Dimanche de la vie): Novel, Raymond Queneau, Shueisha, 1986

III. Helvetica Standard

- "Game Sound Music ~Famicom Hen~" (ゲームサウンドミュージアム 〜ファミコン編〜, "Game Sound Museum ~Famicom Edition~"): Candy Toy (Shokugan), MegaHouse, 2004
- *Nobunaga's Ambition: Lord of Darkness*: Video Game (Super Famicom), Koei, 1991
- *Raid on Bungeling Bay*: Video Game (Family Computer), Hudson Soft, 1985
- *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*: Video Game (PlayStation 2), Rockstar Games / Capcom, 2004
- *Seaman: Forbidden Pets - Dr. Gassé's Experimental Island*: Video Game (PlayStation 2), ASCII, 2001
- *Emo-yan no 10-bai Pro Yakyū* (エモやんの 10 倍プロ野球, "Emo-yan's 10x Pro Baseball"): Video Game (Family Computer), Hect, 1989
- *Ganso Saiyūki: Super Monkey Daibōken* (元祖西遊記 スーパーモンキー大冒険, "Original Journey to the West: Super Monkey Adventure"): Video Game (Family Computer), VAP, 1986
- *LaSalle Ishii no Child's Quest: Nantatte Idol!* (ラサール石井のチャイルズクエスト なんてたってアイドル！, "LaSalle Ishii's Child's Quest: Idol No Matter What!"): Gamebook, Futaba Bunko, 1989
- *Moanin'*: Jazz Album, Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers, Blue Note, 1958
- *My Favorite Things*: Jazz Album, John Coltrane, Atlantic Records, 1961
- *Work Song*: Jazz Album, Nat Adderley, Riverside Records, 1960

Supplement

- *R.O.D -the TV-*: Anime (TV), Original by Hideyuki Kurata, J.C.Staff, 2003

- *Maria-sama ga Miteru* (マリア様が見てる, "Maria Watches Over Us"): Anime (TV), Original by Oyuki Konno, Studio Deen, 2004

IV. Homare (Praise)

- *Momotaro Dentetsu 12: Nishinihon-hen mo Arimasse!* (桃太郎電鉄 12 西日本編もありまっせ！, Momotaro Dentetsu 12: We Have a West Japan Edition Too!): Video Game (PlayStation 2 / GameCube), Hudson Soft, 2003

IV. Milestone

- *Pastoral: To Die in the Country*: Film, Directed by Shūji Terayama, Art Theatre Guild, 1974
- *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*: Theatrical Anime, Directed by Hayao Miyazaki, Topcraft, 1984
- *Match Ippon no Hanashi* (マッチ一本の話, "The Story of a Single Match"): Manga, Ōji Suzuki, Seirinsha, 1972
- *Tokyo Goodbye*: Manga, Ōji Suzuki, Seirinsha, 1974
- *How Many Miles to the Graveyard?* (墓場まで何マイル？): Essay, Shūji Terayama, Yomiuri Shimbun, 1983
- "Ame ni mo Makezu" (雨ニモ負ケズ, "Be not Defeated by the Rain"): Poem, Kenji Miyazawa, 1931

IV. Open the Door!

- "Thank You for the Music": Song, Cornelius, Trattoria, 1997
- *Comic Flapper*: Manga Magazine, Media Factory, 1999–
- *Monthly Shōnen Ace*: Manga Magazine, Kadokawa Shoten, 1994–

Sources for the Main Text (Works by Keiichi Arawi)

Legend (In order of appearance in the main text)

Title (): Published Magazine, Publisher/Publishing Circle (*Name at the time of publication), Place of Publication, Tankōbon Volume Number = Publication Year, URL

Commercial Publications

- *Kazemachi* (カゼマチ): *Monthly Comic Flapper* February–April 2006 Issues, Media Factory
- *Nichijou* (日常): *Monthly Shōnen Ace* December 2006 Issue – December 2015 Issue / December 2021 Issue –, Kadokawa Shoten (later KADOKAWA), Tankōbon Vols. 1–2 = 2007, Vol. 3 = 2008, Vols. 4–5 = 2009, Vols. 6–7 = 2011, Vol. 8 = 2012, Vol. 9 = 2013, Vol. 10, Vol. X (Vol. 10 Special Edition Supplement) = 2015, Vol. 11 = 2022
- *Futari Soccer* (ふたりサッカー, Co-authored with Yasuo Kurashiki): Hakusensha, Tankōbon Vol. 1 = 2010, Vol. 2 (ふたりサッカー2 試合目, "Futari Soccer: The Second Match") = 2011
- *Helvetica Standard Bold*: KADOKAWA, 2011
- *Helvetica Standard Italic*: KADOKAWA, 2014
- *CITY*: *Morning* 2016 Issue 44 – 2021 Issue 10, Kodansha, Tankōbon Vols. 1–3 = 2017, Vols. 4–6 = 2018, Vols. 7–9 = 2019, Vols. 10–12 = 2020, Vol. 13 = 2021
- *Amemiya-san* (雨宮さん): *Monthly Shōnen Sunday* October–December 2021 Issues, January–April 2022 Issues, Shogakukan, Tankōbon Vol. 1 = 2022

Self-Produced Published Works

- *Shiawase no Kakudo* (幸せの角度, "The Angle of Happiness"): Himarayairuka, Comitia 63, February 2003
- *Hakoniwa* (箱庭, "Miniature Garden"): Himarayairuka, Comitia 64, May 2003
- *Hane* (はね, "Wing"): Himarayairuka, Comitia 65, August 2003
- *Machi* (街, "Town"): Himarayairuka, Comitia 66, November 2003
- *Sasameyuki* (細雪, "Light Snow"): Himarayairuka, Comitia 67, February 2004
- *Kokoro* (こころ, "Heart"): Himarayairuka, Comitia 68, May 2004
- *Homare* (誉, "Honor"): Himarayairuka, Comitia 69, August 2004
- *Mogura Vol. 0* (もぐら Vol. 0, "Mole Vol. 0") (Co-authored with Takeo Maeda): Himarayairuka, Comitia 69, August 2004
- *Milestone* (マイルストーン): Himarayairuka, Comitia 70, November 2004
- *Shouwa. Ichi* (Shouwa。壱, "Shouwa. 1"): Himarayairuka, Comitia 70, November 2004

- Jōhanki Calendar: '05 Seikatsu (上半期カレンダー 05 生活, "First Half Calendar: '05 Life"): Himarayairuka, Comiket 67, December 2004
- *Nichijou* (日常): Himarayairuka, Comitia 75, August 2006 (Originally distributed February 2006)
- *Hirake!* (開けっ！, "Open It!"): Himarayairuka, Comitia 77, August 2006
- *Homare* (ほまれ, Different work from the Comitia 69 release): Himarayairuka, Comitia 80, May 2007
- *Shiawase no Kakudo* (幸せの角度, Different work from the Comitia 63 release): Himarayairuka, Comitia 83, February 2008
- *Himarayairuka Kawaraban* (ヒマラヤイルカ瓦版, "Himalayairuka Tile-block Print"): Himarayairuka, Comitia 87, February 2009
- *Helvetica Standard* (Compilation of the essay manga series published on the Himarayairuka website. Different from the commercially published tankōbon): Himarayairuka, Comitia 89, August 2009
- Himarayairuka Kawaraban Vol. 2 (ヒマラヤイルカ瓦版 Vol.2, "Himalayairuka Tile-block Print Vol.2"): Himarayairuka, Comitia 89, August 2009
- *Kioku Seki* (記憶席, "Memory Seat"): Dois Volante, Comitia 92, May 2010
- *46spring 1*: Himarayairuka, Comitia 100, May 2012
- *46spring 2*: Sensei no Kaban, Comitia 107, February 2014

Self-Produced CDs

- ugokazu: Himarayairuka, Kansai Comitia 24, May 2004

Websites and Social Media

- How Do You Smoke:
  Second half of 2000 – First half of 2001, http://www.interq.or.jp/snake/easyride
- Arai-ryū Sumi-e (新井流墨絵, "Arai-style Ink Painting"): First half of 2001 – March 2002, http://www.interq.or.jp/snake/easyride
- Azumanga Nantoka (あずまんがナントカ, "Azumanga Something"):
  March – August 2002, http://www.interq.or.jp/snake/easyride/azu-top.htm
- Himarayairuka: September 2002 – January 2005, http://www.himarayairuka.com
- kumomadori blog: May 2006 – March 2010, http://kumomadori.jugem.jp
- besidegames.com:
  March 2008 – around April 2009, http://player.besidegames.com/arawi/
- Twitter (@himaraya): April 2009 –, https://twitter.com/himaraya
- YouTube:
  December 2010 – (Video posting began in 2015), https://youtube.com/user/pafe62

- Tumblr (kumomadori): June 2013 – October 2014, http://kumomadori.tumblr.com
- Helvetica Standard note: February – July 2021, https://note.com/keiichiarawi

Web Radio

- Ustream (kumomadori radio channel): December 29–30, 2011; October 20–21, 2012 http://www.ustream.tv/channel/kumomadori%E3%83%A9%E3%82%B8%E3%82%AA
- Ustream (arawi channel): December 22–23, 2012; December 7–8, 2013; March 22–23, 2014; November 1–2, 2014; December 19–20, 2015 http://www.ustream.tv/channel/arawi
- CaveTube (Kumomadori Radio): March 18–19, 2017; December 16–17, 2017 https://www.cavelis.net/live/sawada04
- YouTube (Kumomadori Radio): February 10–11, 2020
- YouTube (Kumomadori Hōsō): December 19–20, 2020; December 31, 2021

Guest Contributions to Other Works

- *Party De Aru Koto* (パーティーである事, "The Act of Being a Party"), *Yukimida no Shiro Mahō* (雪見田の白魔法, "Yukimida's White Magic"), *Pino no Sanpo* (ピノの散歩, "Pino's Walk"): Included in *Tartaru Bōkenki* (タルタル冒険記, "Tarutaru Adventure Chronicle"), Pu-pa-zu, Comiket 63, December 2002
- *Inpū* (Hidden Wind): Included in Moe Maniax, Honeywort Studio, Comiket 64, August 2003
- "(Title Unknown)": Publication unknown, Pu-pa-zu, Comiket 66, August 2004
- *Shimako-san no Nayami* (志摩子さんの悩み, "Shimako-san's Worries"): Included in Chikuwabu, Dioxin, Comiket 67, December 2004
- *Limousine* (リムジン): Included in *Osaka Banpaku* (大阪万博, "Osaka Expo"), Shogakukan, 2009
- *Bokonon* (ボコノン): Included in *Soredemo Machi wa Mawatteiru ~Maruko-chō Shōtengai 2010 Natsu Tokudai-gō~*, Shonen Gahosha, 2010
- Barubora Picture Diary: January 24, 2010 (ばるぼら絵日記 2010 年 1 月 24 日):
  Barubora no Log (ばるぼらのログ), http://www.jarchive.org/log02.html
- "Masami Yuki 30+1": Supplement to the First Press Limited Edition of Masami Yuki's *Birdy the Mighty Evolution* Vol. 7, Shogakukan, 2011
- *Manga Michi to* (漫画道と, "With Manga Michi"): Included in *Fujiko Fujio A Manga Michi Vol. 6 "Seiun-hen 3"*, Shogakukan Gamanga Books, 2013
- Illustration included in the bookstore purchase bonus leaflet for Daioki's *Wakuwaku Locomotion* Tankōbon Vol. 1, 2013
- Provided Background Illustration for Episode 3 of the anime *Wish Upon the Pleiades*, 2015
- Bumper Illustration for Episode 9 of the educational program *Otona no Stretchman*, 2018

- Provided Background Illustration for Episode 12 of the variety program *Nijisanji no Kujijūji*, 2019
- "Comitia": Included in *Jibun-tachi no Comitia* (自分たちのコミティア, "Our Comitia"), Dois Volante, Comitia 134, November 2020

Uncollected Manga/Text

- *Monthly Shōnen Ace* End-of-Volume Author Comments: Kadokawa Shoten, 2006–2015
- "Local Poster Illustration: Gunma Prefecture," "Kadokawa Group Comic Festival (Kado★Comi) Summer 2012": Project, Kadokawa Shoten
- 30th Anniversary Congratulatory Message: *Comitia 30th Chronicle* Vol. 1, Comitia Executive Committee, 2014
- *Meijin to no Omoide* (名人との思い出, "Memories with the Meijin"): *CoroCoro Aniki* Vol. 5, Shogakukan, 2016
- "Music and I" #1–2 (音楽と私): *Monthly Newtype*, July–August Issues, KADOKAWA, 2016
- "Confession" #1–9 (吐露, *CITY* Vols. 3–5 Bookstore Purchase Bonus): 2017–2018
- "Anime Story" #1–8 (アニメ話): *Monthly Newtype* June 2018 – January 2019 Issues, KADOKAWA
- "Submission and Creation" #1–2 (投稿と創作): *Monthly Newtype* February, April 2019 Issues, KADOKAWA
- "Initial Impulse " (初期衝動): *Monthly Newtype* September 2019 Issue, KADOKAWA
- *Sennen Ōkoku* (千年王国, "Millennial Kingdom"): *Continue* Vol. 59, Ohta Publishing, 2019
- "Gunma Prefectural Isesaki Commercial High School 100th Anniversary Ceremony" Distributed Print: 2019
- "Mother": *Pollyanna*, Hobonichi Co., Ltd., 2020

Other Works Not Collected in Tankōbon

- Circle Cut Illustrations: Comitia *Tier's Magazine* Nos. 63–71, 75, 77, 2003–2004, 2006
- "What is Manga Photo-Engraving?" (漫画製版って何？): Illustrations for the Shinkohsha website, http://manga.shinkohsha.net/what
- Questionnaire Postcards: Included in the first editions of *Nichijou* Tankōbon Vols. 1–9, 2007–2015
- First Edition Supplements and Bookstore Bonus Illustration Cards: *Nichijou* Tankōbon series, 2007–2015
- "PTA Education Seminar / 140th Anniversary Special Project" Announcement Print: Distributed at Maebashi City Arako Elementary School
- Creator's Calendar 2015-2016 Illustration: Supplement to *Monthly Newtype* January 2015 issue

- 1/35 Scale Plastic Model MechatroWego No. 03 Light Blue & Pink Box Art: Hasegawa, 2015
- *Moji no Mihon 2.0: Font Guide for Distinguishing Kana* (もじのみほん 2.0 仮名で見分けるフォントガイド, "Sample Letters 2.0: Font Guide for Distinguishing Kana") Advertising POP Illustration: Seibundo Shinkosha, 2016
- First Edition Supplements and Bookstore Bonus Illustration Cards: *CITY* Tankōbon series, 2016–2021
- 1/35 Scale Plastic Model MechatroWeego No. 10 Animal "Retro & Azuki" Box Art: Hasegawa, 2018
- Gunma Prefectural Isesaki Commercial High School 2020 Enrollment Prospectus: 2019
- MechatroWeego x Evangelion Collaboration Series Vol. 1 Unit-00 + Rei Ayanami: Hasegawa, 2020
- Interview for This Book: Conducted via Skype chat. Some of the text entered by Arawi was revised by the author for publication. The interview took place irregularly between February 2018 and August 2021.

Sources for the Main Text (Interviews, Reviews, etc.)

Legend

- Article Title/Event Name: Author/Medium/Magazine/Website, Publisher, Publication Year, URL

Interviews and Dialogues with Arawi

- "Keiichi Arawi: Off-the-Charts, Otherworldly Creativity!" (あらゐけいいち 桁外れの異次元的創造力！): *Studio Voice* January 2008 Issue, Infas Publications
- "Commemorating the DVD Release of 'Yoiko to Kinkeshi': Yoiko x Keiichi Arawi - A Night of Endless Kinkeshi Talk" (『よゐことキンケシ』DVD発売記念 よゐこ×あらゐけいいち 対談尽きないキンケシトークの夜): *Quick Japan* Vol. 81, Ohta Publishing, 200
- "One Item That Captivated Me" (私を虜にした一品): *Studio Voice* January 2009 Issue, Infas Publications
- "How to Art: Art Expedition Team - Keiichi Arawi: Creating with the Tension of Stepping onto a Stage" (how to art アート探検隊 あらゐけいいち – 舞台に上がるような緊張感で作り上げる): *Monthly Newtype* January 2009 Issue, Kadokawa Shoten
- "His Hand Vol. 7: Keiichi Arawi" (彼の手 第7回あらゐけいいち): *Newtype Romance 2009 Winter*, Kadokawa Shoten
- "The History of Manga Vol.23: Keiichi Arawi" (まんがに歴史あり第23回あらゐけいいち): *Chorus* March 2009 Issue, Shueisha
- "Interview: Keiichi Arawi": *Tier's Magazine 89*, Comitia Executive Committee, 2009
- "Report: Comitia is Interesting! Keiichi Arawi × Sukune Inugami × TAGRO × Kōji Tsukamoto" (REPORT コミティアが面白い！あらゐけいいち × 犬上すくね ×TAGRO× 塚本浩司): *Quick Japan* Vol. 86, Ohta Publishing, 2009
- "Tell Us! The Daily Life of Original Creator Keiichi Arawi" (教えて！原作・あらゐけいいちの日常): *Monthly Newtype* July 2011 Issue, Kadokawa Shoten
- "Hon Yomiuri-do Comic-kan: 'Nichijō-kei Manga's' Popularity - A Wonderful Space Detached from Reality" (本よみうり堂コミック館『日常系マンガ』が人気 現実離れのステキ空間): *Yomiuri Shimbun Evening Edition*, November 28, 2011
- "The Dream Story of That Person Who Loves Soccer Dearly No. 102: Keiichi Araw" (サッカーを愛してやまないあの人のゆめのはなし No.102 あらゐけいいち): Suruga Bank, November 6, 2012, http://www.idream-jp.com/yume/102.php
- "Local Hot News: Pop Culture Tourism for Town Revitalization" (地域発ホット通信 聖地巡礼 町おこしに): *Jomo Shimbun*, August 30, 2012

- Fujiko Fujio A Autograph Session & Talk Show (Appeared as a guest): Held at Tsutaya Roppongi, December 8, 2012
- "Special Interview: Asking the Person Everyone's Talking About! That Person's Picture Book - Keiichi Arawi" (スペシャルインタビュー 今、話題のあの人に聴きました！ あの人の絵本 あらゐけいいち): *Monthly MOE* February 2014 Issue, Hakusensha
- "Arawi's Top 5 Favorite Kaiju Ranking" (あらゐの好きな怪獣ランキングベスト 5): *Monthly Hero's* June 2015 Issue, Hero's
- "Young Artists Ask 'The Secret of Manga!' 2nd Season Volume 5: Keiichi Arawi" (若手作家が聞く『マンガの極意！』2nd シーズン第五回 あらゐけいいち): *Jump S.Q.* Official Website, Shueisha, May 2016, http://jumpsq.shueisha.co.jp/contents/manganogokui_2nd5/
- "Keiichi Arawi Manga Debut 10th Anniversary Mini-Project: Arawi & Barubora Talk - 10 Randomly Chosen Songs" (あらゐけいいち漫画家デビュー十周年小企画：あらゐ&ばるぼら放談 なんとなく選んだ 10 曲): Barubora, August 2016, http://www.jarchive.org/arawi10th
- "My Favorites: My 3 Favorite Discs Volume. 96: Keiichi Arawi" (マイ・フェイバリッツ 私の好きな 3 枚 Vol.96 あらゐけいいち): *Monthly Newtype* March 2017 Issue, KADOKAWA
- *Kodansha Presents: Yoshida Hisanori no Comi Para!* (講談社プレゼンツ 吉田尚記のコミパラ！): Radio Program (Guest appearance), Broadcast March 24, 2017
- "Next Time, He's Running Through the 'City'!: *CITY* - Keiichi Arawi" (今度は"街"を駆けめぐる！『CITY』あらゐけいいち): *Da Vinci* April 2018 Issue, KADOKAWA
- "Gen Hoshino My Best Contribution by 12 Writers and Manga Artists: Keiichi Arawi" (星野源 作家・マンガ家 12 名によるマイ・ベスト寄稿！ あらゐけいいち): *Da Vinci* December 2018 Issue, KADOKAWA
- "Comitia: What We Can Do Now for the Future of Manga, Part 4 - Messages from Manga Artists " (コミティア ― マンガの未来のために今できること 第4回 マンガ家からのメッセージ): Comic Natalie Article September 30, 2020, Natasha, Inc., https://natalie.mu/comic/column/391745
- "Keiichi Arawi's Daily Life 2 (Nichijou no Jijou)" (あらゐけいいちの日常 2 (ニチジョウノジジョウ)): *Monthly Newtype* December 2021 Issue, KADOKAWA

References Used for Work Analysis

- *Green Campus: Takasaki City University of Economics Junior College No. 13*: Takasaki City University of Economics Junior College, Published October 6, 1995
- "WAM Book: My 3 Favorite Books" (WAM BOOK 私のハマった 3 冊): Barubora, *Weekly ASCII* September 25, 2007 Issue, ASCII
- "The Way the Gags Land is Tremendous! 'Nichijou'" (ギャグのトピ方が凄まじい！『日常』): Shōtarō Miya, *Studio Voice* November 2007 Issue, Infas Publications

- "A Masterpiece Packed with "Laughter" That Can Only Be Expressed Through Manga!" (マンガだからこそ表現できる"笑い"がみっしり詰まった傑作！): Daisuke Yoshida, *SPA!* November 27, 2007 Issue, Fusosha
- "Moe × Absurd Gag × Drifters × ASCII Culture" (萌え×不条理ギャグ×ドリフ×アスキー文化): Barubora, *Quick Japan* Vol. 75, Ohta Publishing, 2007
- "Director Tatsuya Ishihara & Assistant Director Taichi Ishidate Interview: An Adventure Surrounding 'Nichijou'" (石原立也監督・石立太一副監督インタビュー『日常』をめぐる冒険): *Monthly Anime Style* Vol. 5, Style Co., Ltd., 2011
- *Nikkei Entertainment!* November 2012 Issue, Nikkei BP
- "Crunchyroll Editorial's Top 100 Anime of the Decade: 25-1": Crunchyroll, November 26, 2019, https://www.crunchyroll.com/pt-br/anime-feature/2019/11/26-1/crunchyroll-editorials-top-100-anime-of-the-decade-25-1
- "Nichijou, the Goofy Manga Classic, Drew Inspiration From a Tarantino Flop": Andrew Mcllvaney, *Fanbyte*, June 10, 2020, https://www.fanbyte.com/features/nichijou-the-goofy-manga-classic-drew-inspiration-from-a-tarantino-flop
- "The Best Anime Of The Decade - 2010 And 2011": *Forbes*, December 2, 2019, https://www.forbes.com/sites/laurenorsini/2019/12/02/the-best-anime-of-the-decade2010-and-2011

Keiichi Arawi Career Timeline (1977–March 2022)

1977 (Age 0)

- December 29: Born in Tomida-machi, Maebashi City, Gunma Prefecture, as the eldest son of the Arai family. Real name: Keiichi Arai.

1984 (Age 5)

- Entered Maebashi City Arako Elementary School.

1990 (Age 12)

- Entered Maebashi City Arato Junior High School. Joined the weightlifting club.
- December: A postcard submission was published for the first time in the "Famitsu Chōnaikai" section of the video game magazine *Famicom Tsūshin*. Pen name: "Arato no Arai."

1992 (Age 14)

- An application postcard was accepted for a segment on the TBS Radio program *Gorō Kishitani's Radio Club*. Pen name: "Mr. Arai." After appearing on the program via telephone, his own segment, "Mr. Arai no Zettai Yatta Koto Aru Series" (commonly known as Zetsu-Aru), began.

1993 (Age 15)

- Entered Gunma Prefectural Isesaki Commercial High School. Joined the Karate club. Achieved good results in the rookie tournament and was selected as a designated athlete for Gunma Prefecture.

1994 (Age 16)

- Bought a full set of manga tools for the first time and wrote/drew the practice work "Pa-o" (Incomplete).

1995 (Age 17)

- Formed the music band "Yayoi" with friends and continued activities until high school graduation.

- September: An illustration submitted via postcard was published in the video game magazine *Dengeki PC Engine*.

1996 (Age 18)

- January: An illustration submitted via postcard was published in *Famitsu*. Pen name: "Kikōshi Arai."
- April: Moved to Nishi-Kawaguchi, Saitama Prefecture, aiming to become a comedian. Formed the comedy duo "Gaucho" with a friend and joined the talent agency Prime One.

1997 (Age 19)

- Appeared on variety shows *Downtown no Gottsu Ee Kanji*, *Owarai Kōjō Iinkai: Warawasero!*, and *King's Brunch*.
- Appeared as an extra in the movies *Open House* and *La Ruban: The Murder Case of the SM Club Owner*.

1998 (Age 20)

- Disbanded Gaucho and retired from comedy. Around that time, joined his relative Hiroshi's music band as a vocalist, but left after a short while.

1999 (Age 21)

- Moved to Koenji, Tokyo.

2000 (Age 22)

- Began practicing with the aim of becoming a professional skateboarder.
- Launched his first self-made website, How Do You Smoke?

2001 (Age 23)

- Challenged himself with sumi-e (ink wash painting). Launched the website Arai-ryū Sumie to publish his works.
- **From November**: Began handling illustrations for "Eiichi Hasegawa's Wisdom Bag" in the medical magazine *Medical Asahi*, marking his first commercial illustration work.

2002 (Age 24)

- **March**: Launched the *Azumanga Daioh* fan site Azumanga Nantoka. Launched the web radio distribution site Tengoku Cafe and broadcasted the radio program "Tengoku Hōsō."
  - Around this time, he suffered a ligament injury and gave up on becoming a skateboarder.

- **August**: Joined the photo-engraving company Shinkōsha.
- **September**: Seriously resolved to become a manga artist and launched the website Himarayairuka to publish original works. Released his first original manga, *Nantonaku: Tengu Minarai Emaki*, and his first essay manga, *Manga-dō*.
- **October**: Wrote his first serialized manga, *Gona B* (Incomplete).
- **December**: At Comiket 63, contributed three works—*Party De Aru Koto*, *Yukimida no Shiro Mahō*, and *Pino no Sanpo*—to the *Final Fantasy XI* tribute dōjinshi *Tartaru Bōkenki*.

2003 (Age 25)

- **February**: Participated in Comitia for the first time. At Comitia 63, released his first original manga, *Shiawase no Kakudo*. Broadcasted the web radio program "Himaraya Nights."
- **May**: Released the manga *Hakoniwa* at Comitia 64.
- **August**: Released the manga *Hane* at Comitia 65. At Comic Market 64, contributed the manga *Inpū* to the *Azumanga Daioh* tribute manga dōjinshi *Moe Maniax*.
- **September**: Began production on his first short animation, *Anonymous*.
- **October**: Released his first self-composed DTM (Desktop Music) track, "Tobazu Tori."
- **November**: Released *Machi* at Comitia 66. Wrote the flash fiction story *John Mac Wear*.
- **December**: Released his first web manga, *Futsū*. At the end of the year, moved to the Wakaba Heights apartment in Asagaya, Tokyo.

2004 (Age 26)

- **February**: Released the manga compilation *Sasameyuki* at Comitia 67.
- **March**: Began posting the web manga *Helvetica Standard* (all 72 chapters).
- **May**: Released the manga *Kokoro* at Comitia 68. Created his second DTM track, "Nezu no Neko." Released the self-produced CD "ugokazu" and the second printing of *Sasameyuki* at Kansai Comitia 24.
- **August**: Released *Homare* at Comitia 69. Released his first free paper, *Mogura Vol. 0*. At Comiket 66, contributed a manga (title unknown) to an anime *R.O.D -the TV-* tribute dōjinshi.
- **November**: Released the manga *Milestone* at Comitia 70. Released the free paper Shouwa. Ichi.
- **December**: Produced the matchbox "Himarayairuka Roman Match." At Comiket 67, contributed the manga *Shimako-san no Nayami* to the Maria-sama ga Miteru tribute dōjinshi Chikuwabu. Sold the calendar "'05 Seikatsu."

2005 (Age 27)

- Seriously resolved to become a professional manga artist and ceased activities on the Internet.
- Drew the manga *Obake Poi!* (Unreleased).
- Submitted two manuscripts to publishers: the manga *Kazemachi* and a "Moe 4-koma manga" (title unknown, unreleased).

2006 (Age 28)

- **January**: *Kazemachi* was published in the manga magazine *Comic Flapper*, marking his commercial manga debut.
- **February**: Released the manga *Nichijou* at Comitia 75.
- **March**: *Nichijou* won the Honorable Mention Award at the 22nd Ace Newcomer Manga Awards. Opened the website kumomadori blog and resumed internet activities. Began serialization of the one-shot version of Nichijou in the manga magazine *Monthly Shōnen Ace* (6 chapters total; one chapter was titled *Futsū*).
- Around this time, moved to Hachioji, Tokyo.
- **July**: Drew the manga *Match* (Unreleased).
- **July–August**: Handled publicity illustrations for the "24th Ace Newcomer Manga Awards."
- **August**: Released the manga *Hirake!* at Comitia 77.
- **November**: Serialization of *Nichijou* was confirmed. His illustration appeared on the cover of *Shōnen Ace* for the first time. Handled the manga for "Welcome to the World of Manga Photo-Engraving!" on the Shinkōsha website and cooperated by providing manga manuscripts.

2007 (Age 29)

- Took a leave of absence from Shinkōsha. Embarked on the path of a professional full-time manga artist.
- **January**: Contributed the *Fate/stay night* tribute illustration "Fate/Nichijou" to the "Fate/stay night Collaboration Booklet," a bookstore purchase bonus for *Shōnen Ace*.
- **February**: Began a special guest serialization of *Nichijou* in the media mix magazine *Monthly Comptiq*. Handled the text and illustrations for "Shinonome Post," a reader submission column in the margins of the manga pages in *Comptiq*.
- **March**: Contributed the manga "Fate/Daily life" to "Noble Illusion," a bookstore purchase bonus for Vol. 3 of the manga *Fate/stay night*.
- **May**: Released the manga *Homare* at Comitia 80.
- **July**: Released the first tankōbon volume of *Nichijou*. The first edition included a newly drawn questionnaire postcard.

  - Started the prize campaign "Arawi-darake no Keiichi Matsuri." Drew 100 types of original illustrations for button badges distributed to winners, and drew a New Year's card distributed to applicants.
  - Began a special guest serialization of *Nichijou* in the manga magazine *Ace Assault*.
  - Broadcasted a revival of the web radio program "Tengoku Hōsō."
- **August**: Co-released the column book *Arawi to Sawada no Diamond Soccer* (あらゐとさわだのダイヤモンドサッカー, "Arawi and Sawada's Diamond Soccer") with Sawada at Comitia 81, handling the illustrations. Began serializing a promotional manga for *Nichijou* in *Comic Tsūshin*.
- **October**: Released *Nichijou* Tankōbon Vol. 2. The first edition included a newly drawn questionnaire postcard.
  - Held his first autograph session to commemorate the tankōbon release and distributed "Nichijou no Atogaki" (『日常』のあとがき, "Afterword of Nichijou").
  - Published a one-shot of the commercial serialization version of *Helvetica Standard* in the media magazine *Monthly Newtype*.
- **November**: Contributed a manga to the bonus flyer for the music band tae's single "Akai Kuruma" (赤い車, "Red Car").
  - Drew a tribute illustration for the manga *Lucky Star* for a prize campaign in *Comptiq*.
  - Created the T-shirt "kamakura" for the *Ace* 13th Anniversary Fair.

2008 (Age 30)

- **January**: Published an illustration for a New Year's card on Shinkōsha's website.
  - Conceived the original concept for the work that would become *CITY* (Unpublished).
- **February**: Distributed the manga *Shiawase no Kakudo* (a different work from the 2003 release) and the free paper *kumomadori Art solid plan* at Comitia 83.
- **March**: Began the commercial serialization of *Helvetica Standard* in *Monthly Newtype*.
  - Co-produced the soccer column "Futari Soccer: Ito-okashi" with Yasuo Kurashiki in the manga magazine *Young Animal*, handling the illustrations.
  - Began posting articles to the video game blog site Beside Games.
  - Acquired the Twitter account "@arawi."
- **April**: Sold the original T-shirt "kumomadori kamakura global peace" as a limited edition on the kumomadori blog.
  - Contributed a "3-Koma Manga" (3-panel manga) to the culture magazine *Ex-Po* Vol. 3.
- **May**: Handled the cover illustration for Sawada's dōjin novel fanzine *Sekai no Owari de Kōcha wo Hitotsu* (世界の終わりで紅茶を一つ, "A Cup of Tea at the End of the World").
  - Drew a manga scheduled for release at Comitia 84 (Title unknown, unpublished).

  - Published a *Nichijou* extra edition in the magazine *Virtual Walker* Vol. 2.
- **July**: Released *Nichijou* Tankōbon Vol. 3. The first edition included a newly drawn questionnaire postcard.
  - Conducted the 3rd installment of "Arawi-darake no Keiichi Matsuri" and drew new illustrations for button badges.
- **August**: Handled the cover illustration for the dōjin novel *Senjō no Jūnin* (線上の住人, Residents on the Line) by Sawada.
  - Began special guest publication of *Futari Soccer* in the manga magazine *Young Animal Special Issue: Island*.
- **November**: Started the podcast "Arawi to Sawada no Diamond Soccer."
- **December**: Handled the illustration for the demo tape jacket of Fish Basket's single "Sekai Shōjo" (世界少女, "World Girl").
  - Started the web radio "kumomadori Radio," which later became "Kumomadori Radio" (クモマドリラジオ) or "Kumomadori Hōsō."

2009 (Age 31)

- **January**: Published an illustration for a New Year's card on Shinkōsha's website.
  - Released *Nichijou* Tankōbon Vol. 4. The first edition included a newly drawn questionnaire postcard.
  - Conducted the prize campaign "Arawi-darake no Keiichi Matsuri," drawing new illustrations for button badges and the T-shirt "Tonakai" (トナカイ, "Reindeer").
- **February**: Released the free paper *Himarayairuka Kawaraban* at Comitia 87.
  - Handled the cover illustration for Sawada's dōjin novel *Silent House Rule* (サイレント・ハウス・ルール).
  - Contributed a shikishi (autograph board) during the interview for the article "Manga has a History, Volume 23: Keiichi Arawi" in the manga magazine *Chorus*.
  - Contributed an in-story illustration for Hekiru Hikawa's manga *Pani Poni* (reprinted in Tankōbon Vol. 12).
- **April**: Changed his Twitter account to "@himaraya."
- **May**: Handled the original character designs for Sawada's dōjin novel *Yojōhan Senjō* (四畳半戦場, "4.5 Tatami Battlefield").
- **June**: A pin-up poster was published in *Comic Flapper*.
- **August**: Released the *Helvetica Standard* compilation and distributed the free paper *Himarayairuka Kawaraban Vol. 2* at Comitia 89.
  - Handled the cover illustration for *Tia's Magazine 89*.
- **October**: Released *Nichijou* Tankōbon Vol. 5. The first edition included a newly drawn questionnaire postcard.

  - Held the prize campaign "Arawi-darake no Keiichi Matsuri," distributing "Wood Cube Straps with Mio's Hair" to winners.
  - Held an autograph session to commemorate the tankōbon release and distributed the free paper *Himarayairuka Kawaraban Extra*.
  - Contributed the manga *Limousine* to the *Azumanga Daioh* official tribute magazine *Osaka Banpaku*.
  - Drew a tribute illustration for the anime *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya* for a prize campaign in *Ace*.
  - Handled the profile illustration for the musician Angelica in the Bust.
- **December**: Appeared at the club event "Oto Zemi Vol. 3" organized by TAGRO.
  - Contributed a tribute illustration for TAGRO's manga *Hen Zemi*.
  - Contributed a recommendation blurb and illustration for the obi (wrap-around band) of the new edition of Vol. 1 of TAGRO's manga *Uchū Chintai Sarugassō*.

2010 (Age 32)

- **January**: Handled the artwork for the website Barubora Picture Diary (ばるぼら絵日記, "Barubora Enikki").
- **February**: Reprinted the *Helvetica Standard* compilation.
- **March**: Launched the website kumomadori.
- **April**: Contributed an illustration of Muneshige Tachibana to the "Newtype Romance Editorial: Sengoku Picture Scroll Collection."
- **May**: Released the essay *Kioku Seki* at Comitia 92.
  - Production of the *Nichijou* anime series was announced; *Nichijou* graced the cover of *Ace* magazine for the first time.
  - Participated in planning meetings for the anime production, cooperated on the series composition, and accompanied the production staff on location hunting.
- **July**: Published the manga *Shiawase no Kakudo* (2010 version) in the manga magazine *Dengeki Daioh Genesis*.
  - Broadcasted "Keiichi Arawi Hour: Arawi vs Barubora" on Dommune.
- **August**: Contributed the manga *Bokonon* to the tribute manga magazine "Maruko-chō Shōtengai 2010 Natsu Matsuri Tokudai-gō" (丸子町商店街 2010 夏祭特大号, "Maruko-cho Shopping District 2010 Summer Festival Extra-Large Issue") for Masakazu Ishiguro's manga *And Yet the Town Moves*.
  - Contributed the manga *Tokisadame Monologue Sen* (時定モノローグ線, Tokisadame Monologue Line) to the joint dōjinshi *Manga Bluff Original*.
- **September**: Released the "Arama-san" illustration series on kumomadori.

    - Conceived the manga *Kiraku na Dokushin OL 26-sai Arama-san* (気楽な独身 OL26 才あらまさん, "Carefree 26-Year-Old Single Office Lady Arama-san") (Unreleased).
- **October**: Released *Futari Soccer* Tankōbon Vol. 1.
- **November**: Drew the new illustration "Tokisadame Ikkei: Ganka-mae Otoshiana" (時定壱景 眼科前落穴, "One View of Tokisadame: Pitfall in Front of the Eye Clinic") for the bookstore campaign "Kadokawa Group Comic Festival (Kado-Comi) Winter 2010."
- **December**: Contributed the *Kariage-kun* tribute manga *Honnyara Gokko* (ほんにゃらゴッコ, "Honnyara Game") to the weekly magazine *EX Taishū*.
    - Contributed a tribute illustration to the bookstore purchase bonus for Vol. 2 of Daioki's manga *Harumination*.
    - Handled the illustration for the supplement calendar of *Monthly Newtype*.
    - Drew a new illustration for a mug prize in the "Mobile Point Campaign" celebrating the 16th anniversary of *Ace*.

2011 (Age 33)

- **February**: Contributed a tribute illustration for *Kyūkyoku Chōjin R* to the booklet included in the limited edition of Vol. 7 of Masami Yuki's manga *Birdy the Mighty Evolution*.
    - Devised planning segments for *Nichijou no Radio* (日常のラジオ), the voice actor radio program for the anime *Nichijou*.
- **March**: The 4-koma manga magazine *4-koma Nano Ace* was launched; handled the cover illustration, began a special guest serialization of *Nichijou*, and the first supplement "Nichijou School Calendar" was included.
    - Released the limited and regular editions of *Nichijou* Tankōbon Vol. 6. The first edition included a newly drawn questionnaire postcard.
    - Created the storyboards for the limited edition bonus DVD "Nichijou Episode 0."
    - Handled the cover illustration for *Ace*.
    - Conducted "Ace de Fukkatsu! Arawi-darake no Keiichi Matsuri" (エースで復活！あらゐだらけのけいいち祭り, "Revival at Ace! The Arawi-Full Keiichi Festival"), using existing illustrations for reprint button badges.
- **April**: The *Nichijou* anime broadcast began; handled the script for Episode 26 and drew new background illustrations for the sponsor screens.
    - Illustrations were used for the clear file supplement in *Ace*.
- **May**: Handled the cover illustration for *Nano Ace* and drew a new illustration for the pen holder supplement.
- **June**: Sales of the *Nichijou* anime DVD/Blu-ray series began; handled the jacket illustrations for all 13 volumes.
    - Drew a new illustration for the folding fan supplement in *Ace*.

- **July**: Released the tankōbon for the commercially serialized version of *Helvetica Standard*.
    - Released the PSP game *Nichijou (Uchūjin)*; partially supervised the scenario, drew new illustrations for the bonus Hanafuda cards, and drew new illustrations for store-specific pre-order bonus cards.
    - Illustration used for the mini electric fan supplement in *Ace*.
- **August**: Illustrations used for the ballpoint pen and ruler supplements in *Nano Ace*.
    - T-shirts, tote bags, and mugs featuring Nichijou illustrations were sold at "Kadokawa Character Collection 2011 Summer"; drew the new piece "Goldenslumbers" for the reproduction original drawings.
- **September**: Illustration used for the strap supplement in *Nano Ace*.
    - Handled the cover illustration for Shin Iyohara's novel *Petit Prosper*.
    - Began serialization of *Futari Soccer: Tantei-hen* (ふたりサッカー 探偵編, "Futari Soccer: Detective Arc") in *Young Animal*.
    - Handled the cover illustration for *Ace*; illustration used for the "Sakamoto-san Table Clock" supplement.
    - Published the manga *Inu* (犬, "Dog") on Twitter.
- **October**: Illustration used for the hand towel supplement in *Nano Ace*.
    - Released *Nichijou* Tankōbon Vol. 7. The first edition included a newly drawn questionnaire postcard.
    - Held an autograph session to commemorate the tankōbon release and distributed the free paper *Himarayairuka Kawaraban Extra November 6, 2011*.
    - Handled the title lettering and a tribute illustration for Masakazu Ishiguro's manga *Mokuyōbi no Flutto* (木曜日のフルット, "Thursday's Flutto") (reprinted in Tankōbon Vol. 2).
    - Handled the logo mark for the 17th Anniversary of *Ace*.
- **November**: Handled the cover illustration for *Nano Ace*; illustration used for the included tote bag.
    - Handled the top page illustration for Gen Hoshino's official website.
    - Contributed the illustration "Hoshino-san and Hoshino-san ga Yoku Kaku Neko Mitaina Mono" (星野さんと星野さんがよく描く猫みたいなもの, "Hoshino-san and the Cat-like Thing Hoshino-san often Draws") to the bonus paper for Gen Hoshino's album Episode.
    - Released the tankōbon *Futari Soccer: 2-Shiai Me* (ふたりサッカー 2 試合目, "Futari Soccer: The Second Match").
    - Appeared on stage at the after-event for the theater company Lolo's play *Tokonatsu* (常夏, "Everlasting Summer").
- **December**: Illustration used for the pencil case supplement in *Nano Ace*.

2012 (Age 34)

- **January**: The anime *Nichijou* was re-broadcast on NHK Educational TV.
    - Illustration used for the coin case supplement in *Nano Ace*.
    - Handled the cover illustration for *Ace*; drew a new illustration for the mechanical pencil supplement; provided a stamped signature for the Weiss Schwarz "Nichijou" Promo Card supplement.
    - Conducted "The Arawi-Full Keiichi Festival 2012"; illustrations were used for the prize set of 12 bookmarks.
- **February**: Drew new illustrations for the pencil and eraser supplements in *Nano Ace*.
    - Handled the original design drawings for the "Toy's Works Collection: Nichijou no Nītengo" (トイズワークスコレクション 日常のにいてんご, "Toy's Works Collection: Nichijou's 2.5") figures.
    - Drew new illustrations for the three-piece strap set supplement in *Ace*.
- **March**: Handled the cover illustration for *Nano Ace*; drew a new illustration for the pen stand supplement.
    - Drew a new illustration for the schedule book supplement in *Ace*.
- **April**: Illustration used for the pencil board supplement in *Nano Ace*.
    - Conducted the "Zoku: Arawi-darake no Keiichi Matsuri" (続：あらゐだらけのけいいち祭り, "Sequel: The Arawi-Full Keiichi Festival") in *Ace*; drew a new illustration for the prize "Sakamoto-san Die-cut Eraser."
    - Published "Arama-san 28-sai 'Chibagin Cup' wo Tanoshimu no Maki" (あらまさん28歳「ちばぎんカップ」を楽しむの巻, "Arama-san, 28 Years Old: Enjoying the 'Chibagin Cup' Volume") in the specialized soccer magazine *Giant Killing* extra Vol. 9.
    - Drew a new illustration for the card case supplement in *Nano Ace*.
    - Released the manga *46spring 1* at Comitia 100.
    - Handled the cover illustration for Sawada's dōjin novel *Haru ni Saku Hana no* (春に咲く花の, "Of Flowers Blooming in Spring").
    - Handled the jacket illustration for voice actor Mai Aizawa's single "Kimi ni Todoke" (キミニトドケ, "To You").
    - Provided the past illustration "Famicom Girl" to the exhibition "Fami-tte Ītomo" (ファミっていいとも！) held in Gunma Prefecture.
    - Drew a new illustration for the postcard supplement in *Ace*.
- **June**: Appeared as a guest at the autograph session for the release of the manga *Momokuri Sannen* (桃栗三年, Peach Chestnut Third Year); drew a new tribute illustration, which was used for a prize campaign in the manga magazine *Comic Ryu*.

  - Drew a new illustration for "Local Poster: Gunma Prefecture" at "Kadokawa Group Comic Festival (Kado-Comi) Summer 2012."
  - Drew a new illustration for the folding fan supplement in *Ace*.
- **July**: Drew new illustrations for the back cover and bonus button badge of the band Skirt's album "Gekkō Mitsuzō no Yoru Vol. 3" (月光密造の夜 Vol.3, "Moonlight Moonshine Night Vol.3").
  - Appeared at the talk event "The Author of 'Nichijou' Talks About the Daily Life of a Manga Artist" (『日常』の作者が語る漫画家の日常) held in Fukuoka Prefecture.
  - Drew a new illustration for the round fan supplement in *Nano Ace*.
  - Handled the promotional illustration for the movie *Shark Night*.
  - Released 7 types of original T-shirts including "Keppaku na Inu" (潔白な犬, "Innocent Dog"), "Yaken" (野犬, "Stray Dog"), "Nayamu Inu" (悩む犬, "Worried Dog"), "Kidakai Kujaku" (気高い孔雀, "Noble Peacock"), "Yōki na Kujaku" (陽気な孔雀, "Cheerful Peacock"), "Oyasumi Kamakura" (おやすみ kamakura, "Goodnight Kamakura"), and "Nidone no Kamakura" (二度寝の kamakura, "Back to Sleep Kamakura").
- **August**: Handled the cover illustration for *Nano Ace*; handled the illustration for the clear file supplement.
  - Handled the cover illustration for *Ace*. Drew new illustrations for the playing cards supplement.
- **September**: Drew a new illustration for the hand towel supplement in *Nano Ace*.
  - Illustrations were used for 18 types of postcard supplements in *Ace*.
- **October**: Released *Nichijou* Tankōbon Vol. 8. The first edition included a newly drawn questionnaire postcard.
  - Provided a message of support to the web program "Nichijou Ustream."
  - Handled the cover illustration for *Ace*; drew a new illustration for the table clock supplement.
- **November**: Handled the cover illustration for *Nano Ace*; drew a new illustration for the cover of the notepad supplement.
  - Handled the cover illustration for Osamu Koshigaya's novel *Kin'yō no Baka* (Friday's Idiot).
  - Released the *Nichijou* Anime Director's Cut DVD-BOX; produced the bonus footage "Yukko tai Nano: Kūzen no Dai Kessen" (ゆっこ対なの 空前の大決戦！, "Yukko vs. Nano: The Greatest Battle in History!"); drew new bonus illustrations.
  - Illustration used for the scarf supplement in *Ace*.
  - Appeared as a dialogue partner at the "Fujiko Fujio A Autograph Session & Talk Show."
  - Handled the in-store promotional POP illustration for the manga *Manga Michi*.

2013 (Age 35)

- **January**: Handled the cover illustration for *Nano Ace*; illustration used for the keychain supplement.
    - Began serialization of *Tengoku* in *Monthly Newtype*.
    - Contributed the essay "With Manga Michi" to Vol. 6 of the Gamanga Books edition of *Manga Michi*.
- **February**: Released the cover illustration for *Nano Ace*; drew a new illustration for the Ema (votive tablet) supplement.
    - Started the reader submission project "Nichijou no Ema" (日常の絵馬).
    - Handled the cover illustration for *Ace*; drew a new illustration for the clear file supplement.
- **March**: Handled the cover illustration for *Nano Ace*; drew new illustrations for the poster and sticker supplements.
    - Handled the cover illustrations for Tokuya Higashigawa's novels: *Watashi no Kirai na Tantei* (私の嫌いな探偵, "The Detective I Hate"), *Misshitsu no Kagi Kashimasu* (密室の鍵貸します, "Lending the Key to the Locked Room"), *Misshitsu ni Mukatte Ute!* (密室に向かって撃て！, "Shoot at the Locked Room!"), *Kanzen Hanzai ni Neko wa Nanbiki Hitsuyō ka?* (完全犯罪に猫は何匹必要か？, "How Many Cats Are Needed for a Perfect Crime?"), *Kōkan Satsujin ni wa Mukanai Yoru* (交換殺人には向かない夜, "A Night Unsuitable for Exchange Murder"), *Koko ni Shitai wo Sutenaide Kudasai!* (ここに死体を捨てないでください！, "Please Don't Dump the Body Here!"), and *Hayaku Meitantei ni Naritai* (はやく名探偵になりたい, "I Want to Become a Great Detective Soon").
    - Illustration used for the desktop calendar supplement in *Ace*.
- *April*: Published the report manga announcing the results of "Nichijou no Ema" in *Nano Ace*.
    - Contributed a tribute illustration to the bookstore purchase bonus for Vol. 1 of Daioki's manga *Waku Waku Rokkomotion*.
    - Contributed a commemorative message just before the conclusion of Fujiko Fujio A's manga *Ai... Shirisomeshi Koro ni...* (愛…しりそめし頃に…, "When I First Knew Love...") in the manga magazine *Big Comic Special Issue*.
    - Drew three new illustrations for the stamp supplement in *Ace*.
- **May**: Contributed a recommendation blurb and illustration to the obi (wrap-around band) of Vol. 5 of Shunmi Kanzaki's manga *Ren'ai Kaidan Sayoko-san* (恋愛怪談サヨコさん, "Romance Ghost Story Sayoko-san").
    - Contributed "Hoshino Gen Omimai Manga" (星野源お見舞いマンガ, "Gen Hoshino Get Well Soon Manga") to the bonus paper for Gen Hoshino's album Stranger.
    - Drew two new cat-themed bookmarks for the exhibition "Cat's Issue."

- **June**: Drew illustrations for the Trading Card Game "Z/X" schedule checker for one year (total of 12 illustrations).
    - Handled the cover illustration for Kaoru Takeuchi's mathematics trivia book *Taikan suru Sūgaku* (体感する数学, "Experiencing Mathematics").
    - Handled the illustration for the promotional poster for "Kadokawa Group Comic Festival (Kado-Comi) Summer 2013."
    - Started a Tumblr account.
    - Drew a new illustration for the folding fan supplement in *Ace*.
- **July**: Released the *Nichijou* Anime DVD Box Complete Edition.
- **August**: Published the essay manga *Helvetica* 01–03 (The latter part remains unreleased).
- **September**: Handled the cover illustration for *Nano Ace*.
- **October**: Took the podium at the Arako Elementary School 140th Anniversary Lecture "Dream! Challenge."
    - Original drawings of *Nichijou* were published in the bonus pamphlet for the Ace 19th Anniversary Illustration Exhibition.
- **November**: Began publication of the *Futari Soccer* special edition "Hobo Brazil" (ほぼブラジル, "Almost Brazil") in *Young Animal Densi*.
    - Drew a new illustration for the tote bag supplement in *Ace*.
- **December**: Released *Nichijou* Tankōbon Vol. 9. The first edition included a newly drawn questionnaire postcard.
    - Drew new illustrations for the playing cards supplement in *Ace*.

2014 (Age 36)

- **January**: Held an autograph session to commemorate the release of *Nichijou* Tankōbon Vol. 9 and distributed the free paper *Himarayairuka Kawaraban January 26, 2014 Issue*.
- **February**: Released the manga *46spring 2* at Comitia 107.
    - Handled the cover illustration for Sawada's dōjin novel *Dōshite Manga Nano?* (どうして漫画なの？, "Why Manga?").
    - Handled the cover illustration and interior illustrations for the *Nichijou* novelization book *Nichijou no Natsuyasumi* (日常の夏休み, "Nichijou's Summer Vacation").
    - Handled the cover illustration for Shin Iyohara's novel *Rikejo!* (リケジョ！, Retitled from *Petit Prosper*).
- **March**: Handled the cover illustrations for Shinichi Hoshi's novels: *Kimagure Robot* (きまぐれロボット, "The Whimsical Robot"), *Maboroshi no Hoshi* (まぼろしの星, "Phantom Star"), and *Uchū no Koe* (宇宙の声, "Voice of Universe").
- **April**: Handled the cover illustration for Kaoru Takeuchi's science trivia book *Taikan suru Uchū* (体感する宇宙, "Experiencing the Universe").

- **June**: Drew a new illustration for the poster of the "24th Gunma Prefectural Marathon"; commemorative T-shirts were sold.
    - Drew a new illustration for the folding fan supplement in *Ace*.
- **September**: Contributed the manga *Hawaii* to the pamphlet for the Visual Kei rock band GLAY's event "GLAY EXPO 2014."
- **October**: Drew a new illustration for the 20th Anniversary Art Book included as a supplement in *Ace*.
- **November**: Contributed 4 types of illustrations of Nano Shinonome to the social game *Quiz RPG: The World of Mystic Wiz*.
    - Supervised the daily calendar supplement in *Ace* and drew many new illustrations for it.
    - Released the tankōbon *Helvetica Standard Italic*.
    - To commemorate the tankōbon release, the Twitter account operated by the editor of *Nichijou* (@mokujicoment) was launched.
    - Handled the illustration for the calendar supplement in *Monthly Newtype*.

2015 (Age 37)

- **February**: Sales of the LINE Stickers "Keiichi Arawi's Stickers" (あらゐけいいちのステッカー) began.
- **April**: Contributed a tribute illustration for the anime *Wish Upon the Pleiades*.
- **May**: Contributed an *Ultraman* tribute illustration to "Full Color Tsuburaya All Stars" (総天然色円谷オールスターズ) in the manga magazine *Monthly Hero's*.
- **June**: Handled the package illustrations for the plastic model MechatroWeGo series "01 Red & Yellow," "02 Milk & Cacao," and "03 Light Blue & Pink."
    - Opened the blog "Shirushi" and held the reader participation project "Let's Decide This Guy's Name."
    - Handled the cover illustration for *Ace*.
- **July**: Drew a new illustration for the folding fan supplement in *Ace*.
- **August**: Designed the poster and stickers for the collaboration goods "SAME" with CCMS.
    - Sold "Aitsu" original design mugs at Comitia 112.
- **October**: Handled the cover illustration for *Ace*; drew a new illustration for the coin purse supplement.
    - Published the essay manga "MechatroWeGo Package Illustration Memoir" in Figure King Special Edition: Everyone's MechatroWeGo.
- **November**: Contributed a tribute illustration for the manga *Ninja Hattori-kun* to *CoroCoro Aniki*.
- **December**: Released *Nichijou* Vol. 10 (Regular Edition / Special Edition).

    - Published the *Nichijou* special edition "Nichijou no Senden" (Nichijou Promotion) in *Ace*.
    - Released the Flash video "Web Nichijou Vol. 10 Announcement Manga."
    - Handled the package illustration and included stickers for the MechatroWeGo Nichijou collaboration "04 Warm & Cool Shinonome Laboratory Ver."
    - Drew a new promo card with a calendar announcing the conclusion of *Nichijou*.
    - Handled the cover illustration for the paperback edition of Tokuya Higashigawa's novel *Watashi no Kirai na Tantei*.

2016 (Age 38)

- **January**: Conducted the "Maruman Nichijou Drawing Campaign." Handled the campaign illustration and the cover illustration for the collaboration sketchbook.
- **February**: Handled the announcement illustration for "Everyone's MechatroWeGo 4" held at Wonder Festival 2016 Winter.
    - Resold the "Aitsu" original design mug.
    - Released the video "Nichijou Sakuga Fūkei" (『日常』作画風景, "Drawing 'Nichijou'") (Republished in February 2020).
- **March**: Contributed the Takahashi Meijin tribute manga "Memories with the Meijin" to CoroCoro Aniki.
    - Appeared in the manga magazine *Jump S.Q.* project "Young Artists Ask 'The Secret of Manga!'"; contributed a 4-koma manga for idea practice.
- **June**: Handled the package illustrations for MechatroWeGo (1/20) "01 Light Green" and "02 Orange."
    - Published the promotional manga "A Manga About a Bigger WeGo Plastic Model Coming Out."
- **August**: Handled the promotional POP illustration for the font guide book *Moji no Mihon 2.0*.
- **September**: Began serialization of the manga *CITY* in the weekly manga magazine *Morning* Issue 44; handled the cover illustration.
- **November**: Handled the illustration for the calendar poster bonus included with the purchase of "Plush MechatroWeGo BIG Size."
- **December**: Handled the package illustration for MechatroWeGo (1/20) "03 Retro."
    - Published "Desk Mawari Kyun." in the women's magazine *Cocohana*.

2017 (Age 39)

- **January**: Handled the cover illustration for *Morning* Issue 6.
- **March**: Handled the cover illustration for *Morning* Issue 17.

  - Released *CITY* Tankōbon Vol. 1. Held an autograph session to commemorate the release.
  - Distributed the free paper *Kumomadori Kawaraban No. 1* via a net print service.
  - Contributed a tribute illustration for manga artist Yōji Katakura to *CoroCoro Aniki*.
- **April**: Released CITY Tankōbon Vol. 2.
  - Appeared as a guest on the Nippon Broadcasting System radio program *Yoshida Hisanori no Comi Para!*.
  - Released a *CITY* x *Nichijou* collaboration poster.
  - *CITY* clear files were sold at Animate.
- **June**: Handled the cover illustration for Tokuya Higashigawa's novel *Tantei Sae Inakereba* (探偵さえいなければ, "If Only There Were No Detectives").
- **July**: Published the prototype manga for *Amemiya-san* in the serialized work *Tengoku* in *Monthly Newtype*.
  - Handled the package illustration for MechatroWeGo "06 Power Arm Light Green & Green."
- **August**: Exhibited a hand-drawn illustration for a POP display at the event Junkudo Bookstore Ikebukuro Main Store 20th Anniversary Project: "Me and the Ikebukuro Main Store."
- **September**: Handled the cover illustration for *Morning* Issue 44.
  - Released *CITY* Tankōbon Vol. 3. Distributed the essay manga *Toro* as a bookstore purchase bonus.
  - Participated in the *Morning* 35th Anniversary Project "Manga Artists' Picture Shiritori!!" (漫画家絵しりとり!!); drew an illustration of "Daidarabotchi" (ダイダラボッチ).
- **October**: Handled the package illustration for MechatroWeGo "07 Power Arm Purple & Pink."
- **December**: Handled the cover illustration for *Morning* Issue 1; handled part of the cover illustrations for Issues 2/3.
  - Sold *CITY* merchandise at the Natalie Store.
  - Contributed a tribute illustration for the anime *Code Geass: Lelouch of the Rebellion* to the first installment of the "○○-Sensei Tried Drawing Code Geass" (○○先生がコードギアスを描いてみた) series project.
  - Handled the package illustration for MechatroWeGo "08 Sports White & Blue."

2018 (Age 40)

- **January**: Donated a welcome board to the wedding of Yoshihisa Kawahara (voice of Kojiro Sasahara) and Kaori Sadohara (voice of Haruna Annaka), voice actors from the anime *Nichijou*.

- **March**: Released *CITY* Tankōbon Vol. 4. Published the *CITY* promotional project "Sakusha Jisen Episode + Alpha" (作者自選エピソード+α, "Author's Self-Selected Episodes + Alpha") on the official *Morning* website.
- **April**: Handled part of the cover illustrations for *Morning* Issues 21/22; handled part of the artwork for "Daigassaku: Morning no GW Gentei Makunouchi Ressha" (大合作 モーニングの GW 限定幕の内列車, "Great Collaboration: Morning's Golden Week Limited Makunouchi Train").
- **June**: Handled the package illustration for MechatroWeGo "10 Animal Retro & Azuki."
- **July**: Handled the package illustration for MechatroWeGo "11 Morino & Ash."
    - Released *CITY* Tankōbon Vol. 5; distributed *CITY* round fans (uchiwa) at various bookstores.
- **August**: Handled the cover illustration for Morning Issue 35.
- **November**: Handled the package illustration for MechatroWeGo "12 Crystal & Crystal Mint."
    - Released *CITY* Tankōbon Vol. 6; published an illustration of a character "born solely for the purpose of announcing CITY."
    - Contributed a tribute illustration to the educational program *Otona no Stretchman* (オトナのストレッチマン).
    - Published a tribute illustration for Gen Hoshino in the magazine *Da Vinci*.
    - Purchased an iPad, enabling him to do the majority of his drawing digitally.
- **December**: Handled the package illustration for the plastic model MechatroChunk "01 Origin & Forest."

2019 (Age 41)

- **January**: Contributed a tribute illustration to the variety program Nijisanji no Kujijūji (にじさんじのくじじゅうじ).
- **February**: Contributed a recommendation blurb and illustration for Yūta Fujimura's manga *Daijukai no Monster Partner ~Jōka Skill de Mamono Hogo Seikatsu~* (大樹海のモンスターパートナー ～浄化スキルで魔物保護生活～, "Monster Partner of the Great Sea of Trees: Monster Protection Life with Purification Skills").
- **March**: Released *CITY* Tankōbon Vol. 7; published a manga featuring a character "born solely for the purpose of announcing CITY."
- **May**: Published the essay manga *Sennen Ōkoku* in the magazine Continue.
- **June**: Handled the cover illustration for Kei Nitadori's novel *100-oku Nin no Yoriko-san* (100 億人のヨリコさん, "10 Billion Yorikos").
- **July**: Released *CITY* Tankōbon Vol. 8.
- **August**: Held an autograph session to commemorate the release of *CITY* Vol. 8.

  - Announced the 100th-anniversary mascot "Ma-kyun" for Isesaki Commercial High School, and distributed clear files with messages to current students.
- **September**: Handled the cover illustration for *Morning* Issue 43.
  - Contributed a tribute illustration for the manga version of *Bakemonogatari*.
- **October**: Supervised the figures "Arawi Keiichi no Rittai " (あらゐけいいちの立体, "Keiichi Arawi's 3D Objects"); sold all 5 types: "Sakasa Usagi" (さかさうさぎ, "Upside-down Rabbit"), "Milk Neko" (ミルクねこ, "Milk Cat"), "Yodare Inu" (よだれいぬ, "Drooling Dog"), "Tonakai" (トナカイ, "Reindeer"), and "Yume Tamago" (ゆめたまご, "Dream Egg").
  - Began sales of the LINE Stickers "Keiichi Arawi's Stickers 2."
- **November**: Released *CITY* Tankōbon Vol. 9.
- **December**: Sold collaboration goods at Mandarake Complex (Akihabara) and held the solo exhibition "Arawi Keiichi no Tsukue no Ue ni Atta Kami Ten" (あらゐけいいちの机の上にあった紙展, "The Paper on Keiichi Arawi's Desk Exhibition").
  - Contributed an illustration to the back cover of Vol. 9 of Tetsuya Imai's manga *Alice & Zōroku* (アリスと蔵六).
  - Handled the package illustration for MechatroWeGo "13 Tech & Leaf."
  - Around this time, moved to Nerima Ward, Tokyo.

2020 (Age 42)

- **January**: Handled the cover illustration for the paperback edition of Tokuya Higashigawa's novel *Tantei Sae Inakereba* (探偵さえいなければ, "If Only There Were No Detectives").
- **February**: Resold the figures "Keiichi Arawi's 3D Objects" (Arawi Keiichi no Rittai), adding "Coffee Neko" (コーヒーねこ, "Coffee Cat") to the previous 5 types.
- **March**: Released *CITY* Tankōbon Vol. 10.
  - Handled the cover illustration for the Goshuin-cho (stamp book) of Sekisonzan Kannonji Temple.
  - Handled the cover illustration for Yuba Isukari's novel *Ningen-tachi no Hanashi* (人間たちの話, "Stories of Humans").
  - Handled the package illustration for MechatroWeGo "14 Ghost Marshmallow & Chocolate."
- **April**: Began selling merchandise on the original goods creation and sales service SUZURI; drew new illustrations for "Rasen (Kumomadori)" (螺旋(クモマドリ), Spiral (Kumomadori)), "Tonakai," "Aitsu" (あいつ, "That Guy"), and "Kiiroi Obake" (黄色いオバケ, "Yellow Ghost").
- **May**: Released his first full-scale animation videos, "Kaikō" (邂逅, "Encounter") and "Sutebachi" (捨鉢, "Desperation"), on YouTube.

- **June**: Published the manga "MOTHER" in the video game *Mother* tribute magazine *Pollyanna*.
  - Released the video "Geppō 6-gatsu" (月報 6 月, "Monthly Report June") on YouTube.
- **July**: Handled the mascot design for Arai Internal Medicine & Neurosurgery Clinic, a hospital in Ota Ward, Tokyo.
  - Provided the icon for creator Monyaizumi (もにゃゐずみ)'s Twitter account.
- **August**: Handled the package illustration for MechatroWeGo (1/20) "04 Power Arm Mikan Daifuku."
  - Released *CITY* Tankōbon Vol. 11.
  - Released the videos "Ekaki Uta" (絵描きうた, "Drawing Song") and "Geppō 7-gatsu 8-gatsu" (月報 7 月 8 月, "Monthly Report July/August") on YouTube.
  - Released a rough illustration for "Chiisana MechatroMATE" (ちいさなメカトロメイト, "Little MechatroMATE").
- **September**: Contributed a message of support to "Comitia: What We Can Do Now for the Future of Manga" (コミティア-マンガの未来のために今できること).
- **October**: Released the video "Kissa Kumomadori 1-ya" (喫茶 雲間鳥 1 夜, "Cafe Kumomadori Night 1") on YouTube.
  - Sold new merchandise on SUZURI, drawing new illustrations for "108" and "Master (Non-REM/REM)."
- **November**: Released *CITY* Tankōbon Vol. 12.
  - Released the video "Geppō 11-gatsu" (月報 11 月, "Monthly Report November") on YouTube.
  - Handled the cover illustration for the joint dōjinshi *Jibun-tachi no Comitia* at Comitia 134. Contributed the manga "Comitia."
- **December**: Handled the package illustration for the MechatroWeGo x Evangelion collaboration "01 Unit-00."
  - Visited Sekisonzan Kannonji Temple and dedicated the sumi-e (ink painting) "Shiroi Hebi" (白い蛇, "White Snake").

2021 (Age 43)

- **January**: Released the video "Nengajō 2021 (Mugen Shōgatsu)" (年賀状 2021(無限正月), "New Year's Card 2021 (Infinite New Year)") on YouTube.
  - Served as a special judge for the "Morning Short Manga Award."
- **February**: Registered on the article creation site "note" and began the text-based essay "Helvetica Standard note."
- **March**: Released the video "Ushimitsudoki no Amemiya-san" (丑三つ時の雨宮さん, "Amemiya-san in the Dead of Night") on YouTube.

  - Handled the package illustration for the MechatroWeGo x Evangelion collaboration "02 Unit-00" (02 Zerogōki).
- **April**: Released *CITY* Tankōbon Vol. 13 (Final Volume). Held an online autograph session to commemorate the conclusion.
  - Updated "Helvetica Standard note."
  - Released the video "Shingakki no Amemiya-san" (新学期の雨宮さん, "Amemiya-san in the New School Term") on YouTube.
  - Provided the loop animation "Yoru wa Mawaru yo" (よるはまわるよ, "The Night Goes Around") for the Suntory collaboration project "#Tsugi no Recycle Kangaetemita" (#次のリサイクル考えてみた, "#IThoughtAboutTheNextRecycle").
  - Handled the title lettering design for the column Comitia Damashii (コミティア魂, "Comitia Spirit").
  - Handled the package illustration for the MechatroWeGo x Evangelion collaboration "03 Unit-00" (03 Zerogōki).
- **July**: Handled the YouTube advertisement for SUZURI.
  - Handled the cover illustration for Masaya Chiba's book *Writing no Tetsugaku* (ライティングの哲学, "The Philosophy of Writing").
- **August**: Handled the jacket illustration for DJ Kazu's album Jikan Ryokō [DJ Kazu no "Ano Koro" Anison MIX] (時間旅行 [DJ 和の"あの頃"アニソン MIX], "Time Travel: DJ Kazu's "Those Days" Anime Song MIX").
  - Handled the package illustration for the "Nichijou Tsukkomi Karuta" (日常ツッコミかるた) released by CHOCOLATE Inc.
  - Released the video "Amemiya-san to Dokuro no Uta" (雨宮さんとドクロのうた, "Amemiya-san and the Skull's Song") on YouTube.
  - Added new merchandise to SUZURI, drawing new illustrations for "Shippitsugumo" (執筆雲, "Writing Cloud"), "Idea" (アイデア), and "No Idea" (ノーアイデア).
- **September**: Began serialization of the manga Amemiya-san in the manga magazine *Gessan* (Monthly Shōnen Sunday); handled the cover illustration for *Gessan*.
  - Handled the illustration for the "Daiwa Bunko Library Card" campaign.
- **October**: Handled the cover illustration for *Gessan*.
  - *Nichijou* resumed serialization in the manga magazine *Shōnen Ace*; handled the cover illustration and drew a new illustration for the mask case supplement.
  - Handled the cover illustration for Osamu Koshigaya's novel *Marebito Parade* (まれびとパレード).
- **November**: Handled the box illustration for the English paperback set "nichijou 15th anniversary box set."

  - Added new merchandise to SUZURI, drawing a new illustration for "Te no Ue ni Neko ga Notteiru" (手の上に猫が乗っている, "A Cat Riding on a Hand").
- **December**: Handled the package illustration for the MechatroWeGo x Evangelion collaboration "04 Mark.06" (04 Mark Six).
  - Provided the icon for soccer commentator Yasuo Kurashiki's Twitter account.
  - Drew a new illustration for the New Year's card supplement in *Ace*.

2022 (Age 44)

- **January**: Published the essay text and manga "Manga Artist Keiichi Arawi's 'My New Year'" (漫画家・あらゐけいいちさんの『わたしのお正月』) in the fashion and culture magazine *GQ JAPAN*.
- **February**: Contributed a comment to "The Change and Evolution of Pop Culture: Artists Look Back on 15 Years" (ポップカルチャーの変化と進化——アーティストたちが振り返る 15 年).
  - Added new merchandise to SUZURI, drawing a new illustration for "Kumomadori" (クモマドリ).
  - Illustration used for the magnet supplement in *Ace*.
  - Handled the package illustration for the MechatroWeGo x Evangelion collaboration "05 Unit-01" (05 Shogōki).
- **April**: Illustration used for the "31-Day Daily Tear-Off Calendar" (31 日毎日日めくりカレンダー) supplement in *Ace*.

Keiichi Arawi's Complete Works: A Study of His Entire Oeuvre
Volume 1: “Early Manga” (1977-2006)
あらゐけいいち全作品研究 第1巻 初期漫画（1977～2006）

Publication Date: April 20, 2022 (First Edition)

Publisher: Kei Hirayama (平山軽)

Printed by: Ishida Printing

Special thanks to Keiichi Arawi for agreeing to be interviewed, Mr. Sawada for inspiring the creation of this book, and the following individuals for their cooperation:

Mr. A / Mr. K / Mr. Shimizu / Mr. Nishio Nishio (西尾西男) / mican / Rato / Wonderinterest